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THREE POEMS

By FREDERIC TEN HOOR

AND ALMOST ANSWERS . . .

Seeing him labor in a dusty field,
Guiding black horses pulling a machine,
I saw no beauty strikingly revealed
Until he made me partner in the scene.

An afternoon of cutting wheat explains
More than a bulky volume about beauty;
Two horses guided by a pair of reins
Can give new meaning to a word like duty.

Repeat the deed, repeat the word, until
The act is old, the saying platitude;
Yet meaning grows, as understanding will,
Or love that is continually renewed.

For there is something in the simple act
Of doing something very necessary
That goes beyond the unexpressive fact
And almost answers man's unanswered query.

NEARER, EVEN THAN BEING

He likes dim dawn and the uncertain dusk,
Broody and dark days heavy with earth-musk,
Owl-winged fogs that hide things;
And guesses at what is inside things
Like dark rooms and dug wells and deep
And thick woods, where beauty or terror may sleep,
Awaiting his careless tread
And surprise him by being not dead.

He does not care to see too much;
Something must be left to the keener touch
And the very delicate ear,
And the sense that announces when beauty is near;
Nearer than actual seeing,
Nearer, even, than being.

NOT LOVE, NOT HATE . . .

Not love, not hate, not body's suffering
Kept him from his slumbers, but the moon
And the dark stillness of a made lagoon —
Beauty within the city's trafficking —

That he had come upon. This, and other things:
The gradual stilling of his eager lust,
Lazy acceptance of the gathered dust
Within his mind, and dead imaginings.

It was not cars that rattled in the street,
Nor the dead heat of his unlovely room
That weighed the darkness with so final gloom;
But sudden knowledge of a slow defeat.

NEIGHBORS

By ALBERT STENGELSEN

He had the gift of patience; there was no end to the length of time Tollef Larson could wait in order to be sure he was overwhelmingly right. He sat motionless on his plow at the end of a furrow; and, looking steadily eastward, he saw the familiar sight of Jens's cattle coming out of the clump of trees that marked the dividing line of the two farms. The cattle had broken through the fence and were making for the shocks in Tollef's newly cut corn field.

This was not the first time the herd had been in his corn. Nor was this the only thing that had happened to mar the even neighborliness of the community. Ever since Jens and Elise had come to live on the next farm there had been trouble of one sort and another. Jens had borrowed machinery, and had returned it unoiled, or with a bolt loose here and there; he could no doubt tell, if he wished, of the sly, untraceable stories about Tollef that occasionally passed in the neighborhood; and he could explain why the plums on Tollef's side of the fence persistently disappeared every fall before the latter was ready to pick them.

These were small matters, and Tollef was not a man to act in haste. He could sit on his plow and watch the herd playfully ripping up his corn shocks.

He had sat thus for some minutes when, with no change of expression and keeping his eyes still fixed on the scattering cattle, he climbed slowly off his plow and started unhitching.

As he drove up to the barn and began to tie up the lines, his wife Marta came running out.

"Why, what's the matter, Tollef? Did you break something?"

"No."

"Well —" — she looked at him, puzzled — "— quitting this way in the middle of the forenoon."

"Jens's cattle are out again. I'm going over to see about it."

Marta turned away, knowing well the unwisdom of objecting to what he intended doing. But when he came by the house after putting in the horses, she called to him:

"It wouldn't hurt to have a bite of lunch before you go. There can't be any such hurry."

"No," said Tollef, "there isn't any hurry."

While he was drinking his coffee, she watched him anxiously. "Jens ought to look after his cattle more."

He nodded briefly, saying nothing.

"But then," she pointed out, "anybody's cattle are liable to get out sometimes."

She waited awhile. "They've been out pretty often," she admitted. "I guess Jens don't care at all any more. It's because of Elise. I shouldn't wonder if she gets so they'll have to send her away again this winter."

"It's Jens's place to worry about that."

"Yes, it's Jens's place. But if he doesn't, somebody else has to. Don't be hard on them, Tollef."

Without looking up, he inquired: "What makes you think I was going to be hard on them?"

Marta went on unhurriedly: "Besides, it won't be so long now. I heard the place was to be sold on the fifteenth."

"Yes," said Tollef, getting up, "the fifteenth."

The corn was in shock, and there was no great difficulty in rounding up the cattle. The animals knew more about the location of the break in the fence than did the man who drove them.

Once through the thicket, he saw that everything was quiet around Jens's yard. Jens himself was likely out in the fields somewhere. Seeing no one about, Tollef made for the house. And Elise, having heard the commotion made by the cattle, came to the door.

She was a small woman with sharp and questioning eyes. She never spoke more than was necessary. Her expression was stubbornly secretive, and people who looked at her were uneasy, particularly so if they knew she had spent six months in an insane asylum.

Seeing Tollef, she stopped abruptly, holding the door half open.

"I've brought your cattle back." He waited for an answer, but the woman said nothing.

"They were in my corn."

She gave no evidence of having heard him. Tollef flushed; it was not his position to plead.

"I've tried to be a good neighbor," he stated. "I've helped you, now and then, when you needed it. But it don't do much good to treat some people decent and neighborly. Three times your cattle've been in my corn just this week, and I've had about enough. And you'd just as well tell Jens so."

Having finished, he turned deliberately and walked away, not too fast. He was wholly unprepared for what the woman did next. She rushed past him, her eyes bright and hard, toward the machine shed. Only when she came out of the shed did he see her purpose. Carrying a hammer and staples, an axe and a wire stretcher, she set off to fix the fence.

Tollef's brow wrinkled with irritation. He had been put in the position of forcing a woman to do something which he, as a man and a good neighbor, should have offered to do. He walked slowly homeward.

Toward dusk that evening, as he was finishing his chores, he saw Jens approaching. The latter was a little younger than Elise; he was smooth shaved and, except for the ever sullen expression, not unhandsome. The world had treated him ill, and he resented it in the dull, fathomless way of one who has long since lost any intention of doing anything about it.

"Evening," said Jens and went on without waiting for an answer: "I hear my cattle were out today."

Tollef nodded but said nothing. It was up to Jens to do the talking now.

"That stretch of fence ain't much good," went on the latter impersonally. "You can't expect it to hold much."

"Maybe not."

"It's old, and the wire's rotten. Best put up a whole new one," said Jens. "That's what I come over about," he added magnanimously, "to tell you I'd put it up." And he went on calmly explaining that, since this was a line fence separating the two farms, it was only fair that both should contribute to building it.

Tollef speedily understood. "The fence don't do me any good," he objected. "I don't pasture my cattle over that way."

"It's a line fence," persisted Jens coolly. "You'd ought to be willing to do your share. All you've got to do is get the posts and wire. I'll do the work. I don't want to spend anything on it now till I see how things come out."

For a long moment Tollef eyed the other; then he laughed outright. "No, Jens," he said coldly, "you've got the wrong man this time. I'll take care of my cattle. You take care of yours."

Jens shrugged his shoulders. "It's all one to me," he retorted. "I thought I'd offer to do it, just to be fair and neighborly. If you don't want to meet me halfway, it's all right with me. It'll save me trouble."

With no further comment he slouched off toward home. He had gone a few steps when he turned and grinned back through the gathering dusk. "Better haul up your corn if you feel that way about it. My cows've got the taste of it, and a fence like that ain't likely to stop 'em."

Tollef did not move. "Don't let them cows out, Jens," he said evenly. "I'm warning you. I'm not the kind that stands for any trifling."

"So it's a warning now, is it?" The other laughed unpleasantly. "Well, we'll see."

Tollef did not go out in the fields to work next morning. He moved about the yard with unaccustomed indolence, doing only the most necessary chores, and keeping his eyes constantly turned eastward.

Marta watched him anxiously. "Aren't you going out today, Tollef?"

"No." There was a pause. "I've got some fixing to do out in the shed first."

She spoke again, casually: "It'll be too bad if those cattle get out again." She stood thinking for a moment. "I've got most of my work done up. I can just as well go up that way and sort of keep an eye on them."

"No," said Tollef sharply. "No, don't do that."

It was near ten o'clock when, without notifying her, he set off suddenly across the fields. From the thicket a brown head had poked forth; then another and another. No need to wait and check his anger any longer; it was fully justified. Slightings of one kind and another he could pass over as being beneath notice, but there was a limit to what a man might be expected to stand. He felt strangely elated as he strode swiftly along.

Tollef was within forty yards of the herd when a slow, wondering exclamation burst from his lips. He stopped irresolute, staring hard. Coming out from among the trees was Jens's huge, shaggy, red and white bull.

There was no fence, no protection of any kind; nothing but open field lay ahead. What swift and merciless death there might be under the great head and hoofs none knew better than Tollef. When the animal was growing up, he had repeatedly warned Jens, and the latter had at last consented to keep the beast in the barn.

Yet now the bull was out. Fully a minute Tollef stood still while his wrath accumulated. He felt tricked and helpless; besides, there grew in him the feeling that somewhere in among the trees was Jens, watching him and chuckling sardonically over his plight.

Except for a small stick, Tollef was unarmed. It was plain folly to go ahead. With a sickening feeling that he had been bested, he turned halfway about, ready to return home. There was nothing he could do, except perhaps risk his life foolishly.

But he remembered the way Jens had laughed the evening before, and his last words: "Well, we'll see." What had

Jens been thinking as he loosed the animal? What would he say the next time the two men met? An accident, he would call it, and he would be very surprised that the animal had got out . . .

A man couldn't turn back in the face of a thing like this. Very slowly Tollef resumed his steps toward the herd.

For a long time he walked straight ahead, his eyes fixed on the animal. The cows, with the carelessness of their kind, moved draggingly from shock to shock, taking a bite here and there.

Then the bull, now only a hundred feet away, noted the approach of the intruder. The animal suddenly quit chewing and stood perfectly still with head half raised. There was no threat in its aspect, only an alert, watchful curiosity.

With some difficulty Tollef maintained his even pace. He walked on, every muscle in his body tightening as his tension increased. He was within fifty feet when there came a low, preliminary rumble. The animal had not moved. Its head was still within a few inches of the ground, as if it were merely looking up curiously between mouthfuls. But all those hundreds of pounds of bone and flesh were as poised and tense as was Tollef himself. He was not fooled.

He walked on steadily, knowing that in taking the greatest chance lay the greatest safety. Then with a quick jerk of its head the bull bellowed hoarsely. With one forefoot it pawed suddenly at the ground, throwing dirt and dust twenty feet to the rear. Then silence and immobility again.

Shivering a little, Tollef slackened, glancing toward the trees, but did not stop. He was so near that the slightest incident might mean attack by the animal, or flight.

Suddenly he acted, throwing his stick with vicious accuracy. Instead of turning in swift retreat, the bull leaped backward, its hoofs digging deep in the soil. The animal bellowed again, wildly and threateningly this time. Tollef stood still, pale and nearly sick, his play having failed. Out of the corner of his eye he measured the distance to the trees — two hundred feet at least. To run would invite immediate pursuit; and to stay — there was no way of knowing.

Five seconds — fifteen — half a minute passed. With a slow, casual movement the bull lowered its head and caught up a tuft of grass. The tension broke. Tollef walked over and picked up his stick.

"Get out!" He waved the stick. Shying from the threat, the bull turned and made off after the rest of the herd.

This time he did not chase the herd into the yard. He walked to the house and knocked. Elise answered, opening the door hesitantly. When she saw him, Tollef could hear the quick intake of her breath. A moment she stood there, plainly frightened by his sudden appearance, and by the expression on his face; then she slammed the door violently in his face.

There was a distant squeak as the barn door opened and Jens came out. He stood waiting while Tollef walked up to him.

There were no neighborly preliminaries. Tollef, sure enough of himself now, and thoroughly angry with the safe kind of anger that never goes beyond reasonable bonds, said nothing at all. There was no need of argument. He had only to wait and let Jens do the talking.

The latter, a little nonplussed by the visitor's persistent silence, laughed shortly. "Well, you see I was right. A fence like that won't hold them cows now."

"Trying to kill me, Jens?"

"Who, me?" Jens laughed again, a little too readily. "No, not that I know of."

"Letting the bull out," Tollef pursued. "That's pretty dangerous. One of these days he's going to kill somebody."

"Oh, he isn't dangerous. That is —" — Jens paused, smiling covertly — "unless you're scared of him."

"It's one thing to help a man that'll help himself. But" — Tollef indicated the herd — "how far do you think that's going to get you?"

For a moment or two Jens did not reply but stood tracing a pattern in the ground with the toe of his shoe.

"Well," he muttered at last, "you can't blame them cows

for breaking out. There's nothing for them in the pasture. They've got to eat somewhere."

"What do you want me to do? Take them home and feed them for you?"

"No," said Jens sullenly. "No, I'm not asking charity. All I'm asking is a square deal." He paused, then continued in a monotone: "A man gets down on his luck sometimes. Here's winter coming on, and they're taking the farm. Likely they'll take some of the cattle too. They'll get some lawyers to fix it up. They can always twist the law that way."

"It'd be better if they did take the cattle," said Tollef. "You haven't got anything to feed them anyway. Why don't you find some place that's ready stocked, to rent on half shares?"

"And move now toward winter?" Jens laughed. "Oh, no. They can't throw a man out in the snow. Besides, I'm not figuring on moving at all. I'll find out who gets it, and then rent it from him."

"How do you know they'll let you have it?"

"Well," suggested Jens quickly, "why don't you buy it? It lays right next to your land, and you wouldn't have to pay much for it. I'd take it on half shares and put in any crop you want. That's fair enough."

Tollef stared incredulously, silent while he searched for words with which to express himself adequately.

Seeing the expression on his face, Jens continued truculently: "Why not? You wouldn't lose anything by it. You'd get it cheap. And you wouldn't have to bother with it, doing any of the work."

"I don't want it."

"You'd get a good buy and help a neighbor out," persisted Jens.

"I haven't got any money to throw away."

"Oh, all right," acquiesced Jens angrily. "It's getting toward winter, but that don't matter. Elise and me, we'll freeze to death if we're put out. It's all right. You and

your money, just keep it. You can't afford it. If an old neighbor starves, you just count your money and don't do anything. It'll kill Elise, but that don't matter. You'll save a few dollars."

"Listen, Jens," said Tollef. "If I thought you were worthy of help, I'd help you. You aren't. You've got only yourself to blame."

"A fine neighbor you are," retorted Jens. "You wouldn't give a starving man a bite to eat. I need a helping hand for a little while, to get on my feet again. Here's your chance."

There was no reply, and Jens urged: "Well, what do you say? It's a fair proposition, and you'll make money on the place."

"No," said Tollef. He opened his mouth to say more, but changed his mind and turned away. "Keep your cows out of my corn," he said abruptly.

"All right. And you keep off my farm," said Jens coolly. "You and your high and mighty ways." He raised his voice as Tollef moved off. "We don't need you and your kind around here." He paused to give added effect to his final taunt: "Likely you're scheming to bid in the place yourself, just so's you can run me off here."

When Tollef returned home he did not mention his errand, nor did Marta. It was some days before she brought up the matter at all.

She began by remarking casually that the cattle didn't seem to be getting through the fence any more. Tollef made no reply, and after a pause she asked curiously: "Kind of funny, isn't it?"

"No," said Tollef, "not very. I warned him."

Presently she went on: "He hasn't done anything about the fence. I saw that when I was up for the mail."

Tollef knew she was driving at something. "Well," he said finally, "what is it then?"

Marta put her hands on her hips. "You men ain't very bright," she said bluntly. "What do you think? It's Elise. She's been sitting out there herding them."

"So that's it."

Marta became more conversational. "Poor woman. She's not strong enough for that, in this fall weather. Somebody ought to be taking care of her this minute."

"How about Jens?"

"All right," she retorted sharply. "I know she's married to him and he should take care of her and all that. But he'll just sit there, waiting for someone to come and take everything away from him. He won't do anything. He isn't mean, not to her anyway. There's just no git to him. If they don't pay something on their grocery bill, they won't have anything to eat soon. She can't stand much more than she's stood already. And you know what'll happen then, and where they'll send her again."

She paused a little, adding more mildly: "For him it's all right. I don't care. But I'm not going to stand here and see her sent to that asylum again."

On a later day Tollef had been to the County Seat, and Marta was watching for him when he returned. He was as incommunicative as usual, and the silence was broken by Marta's casual question: "Many people in town?"

"No," he returned, "same as usual, about."

"Were you up to the Court House?"

His reply was delayed a moment or two. "Well, yes," he admitted finally, "I did go by there." He forestalled further questions by remarking: "Jens wasn't there."

"I should think he'd have wanted to find out who bought the place anyway." She waited a while. "Who did buy it?"

"How should I know?" He frowned. "It's no business of mine, is it? I've got enough to do to take care of my own affairs, without butting into anybody else's." He picked up his hat and strode out. Inside, Marta was left looking questioningly after him.

Tollef, for his part, with a vigor that showed his uneasiness, set about doing his chores. This done, he stood in the barn door for a moment looking about; then he set off for Jens's place.

The latter was, as usual, late in finishing up his day's work. It was already half dark, and in the barn a lantern was necessary. Jens was up in the hay loft, throwing down hay. Tollef waited for him downstairs.

Presently, carrying the lantern in one hand, Jens came crawling down the ladder. He was fully downstairs before he saw the other.

"Well — what now?" Stepping off the slightly raised cement platform from which he fed the hay to his cattle, Jens hung up the lantern and faced belligerently around.

"I was in town today," said Tollef, "to the foreclosure sale."

A long moment intervened before Jens replied. "I s'pose," he sneered, "you're going to tell me you bought it, and you want me to get out."

Tollef flared up. "And I s'pose," he mimicked, "you're going to tell me you wouldn't stay if I let you." He went on grimly: "The place is mine. I bought it, and I can do what I want with it. You don't deserve charity, but I'm letting you take it on half shares because Marta thinks Elise needs looking after."

For a few seconds, Jens, tense and silent, stood leaning on his fork, gripping the handle so hard that his hands showed white in the yellow light. Then he lifted the fork slowly, holding it like a gun in front of him.

"Get out!" he gritted. "Get out before I stick this in you." His voice rose. "I can see what your scheme is. You're going to use Elise to make me work for you and make money for you. And then when you get good and ready, you're going to kick us out."

Tollef stepped backward. Jens followed. "Get out!" he shouted. With sudden violence he swung the fork in a wide arc, missing Tollef by some inches. The space was too small; the tines caught against a stall and the handle broke.

For a moment Jens stood with the broken fork in his hands, seemingly paralyzed, except for his lips. In a strange, half articulate voice, words bubbled from his tongue —

curses, threats, and obscenities. Watching his chance, Tollef stepped in quickly, reaching for the implement; at the same time Jens tried to swing it again, but the other caught it midway. They struggled back and forth for a moment or two, neither of them being able to twist the fork from the other's hand.

It was Tollef who ended the struggle. While Jens, with the violent effort of a man possessed, wrenched at the handle, Tollef suddenly let go; Jens, unbalanced by the sudden removal of weight, staggered backward, his feet catching against the edge of the cement platform. His head struck hard, with a peculiar backward jerk, and he lay still.

Tollef had scrambled out of reach. But his precaution was unnecessary. For the first moment or two he stood rigid and alert; then he slowly relaxed. His first feeling was one of sharp regret that he had loosed his hold so suddenly. He moved slowly nearer, staring at the prone figure. Jens lay motionless. Up under the ceiling the lantern swung idly back and forth, shedding an uncertain light.

"Jens!" There was neither movement nor answer. The body lay twisted, the head turned stiffly to one side.

"Jens! Get up. You ain't hurt."

Suddenly sure that Jens was really breathing, Tollef dropped to one knee, feeling for a heartbeat. In his hurry he could feel nothing. He pushed the other over to a more comfortable position flat on his back; and as suddenly saw that what he had taken for the rise and fall of Jens's breast was nothing more than the shifting of light from the swinging lantern.

With the discovery, Tollef felt a shiver of fear. Hardly knowing what he was doing, he rose and backed away from the body. Jens lay inert and unresisting, seemingly waiting for Tollef's next move. The latter stopped and stood for some seconds watching; but nothing happened.

If Jens was dead he was a murderer. He could not say that his part in the affair had been unintentional. He had deliberately loosed his hold on the stump of fork handle;

Jens had gone over backward and struck his head on concrete, and now he lay there.

Turning very slowly, Tollef started for the door. Opening it, he went through and quietly closed it after him, shutting in the faint rays of light. Once outside, he looked furtively around. No one was about. In no more than two or three minutes he could be through the trees and out of sight. Probably Elise had not seen him and did not know he was here.

With an effort he forced himself to walk toward the house. Inside he could see the kerosene lamp, lit and standing on the table. Near it sat Elise. She was doing nothing, looking at nothing, merely sitting there and thinking.

Seeing her, Tollef abruptly checked his steps. If Jens was dead, there was no hurry. A minute or two was not too long a time to spend preparing himself to tell her.

He stood still, and the seconds ticked by. He was suddenly angry as he stood there watching Elise, angry because he had to explain. It was not his fault. He was here merely because he had been willing to help out a neighbor; but he had been tricked into seeming at fault. If Jens had not swung the fork — if he, Tollef, had not caught at it, and then, at just the wrong moment, let go . . .

He was no weakling, but he hesitated. His hand, as he knocked, felt stiff and queer. He peered at it in the darkness, doubled his fist and turned it about. Then there were hurried steps inside; the door opened cautiously and Elise looked out, keeping herself partly behind the door.

"I was talking — Jens and me —." What he had to say was merely that Jens was dead, lying on the stone floor out in the barn. But it was not a matter to say straight out. The woman, seeing who it was, opened the door a little wider.

"I can call him, if you want — he's out in the barn," she added hopefully.

"No," said Tollef hurriedly, "no, you don't have to do that. I was just talking with him, and —." He began

stammering out a confused explanation of his original errand, mentioning the date and the foreclosure sale that had taken place.

Elise's queer eyes brightened, perhaps because she understood what had brought Tollef over. "Yes, today is the fifteenth." She paused expectantly, adding: "We don't even know who bought it."

"I did," burst out Tollef. "I bought it. I come over to tell you and Jens, so you could stay, if you wanted to." A flood of words rushed up, and he talked hurriedly, as though every second counted. "I was talking to him out in the barn. But he got mad and wanted to lick me, so I —." He looked at her, choked on the word and fell abruptly silent.

"Yes," she said anxiously. "Yes, he is that way sometimes." She stared uneasily past him, out into the darkness toward the barn. "Leave him alone," she whispered. "Just leave him alone and when he comes in maybe I can talk to him."

"No," said Tollef quickly, "I meant that he tried to kill me. With a fork," he added. "What could I do?" He was aware of the fact that he had explained nothing, and he drove desperately onward: "I didn't do anything. He swung it around and tried to stick me with it. But I stopped him —."

The woman's voice was suddenly very sharp and imperative, her eyes showing for an instant a deep, mad light. "You haven't hurt him!" she cried. "You haven't done anything to him!" She stepped forward menacingly; the man edged backward.

"No," he said hurriedly, "no, what could I do? I had to look out for myself, didn't I? Why should I want to hurt him?"

"Why don't you go home?" she cried. "And leave us alone? Leave Jens alone! He doesn't mean any harm. It's just his way."

The man retreated, dumfounded and silent. Beyond the circle of light he stood and looked at her for a while, then

turned and walked unsteadily away. Leaving the door still open, Elise watched him till her attention wandered; she moved as if without volition toward her chair by the table, where she resumed the position in which Tollef had first seen her.

Tollef's first impulse, directed by the simple unanswerable logic of long habit, was to set off for home. Yet out of the swirl of his thoughts some things were clear: a man lay dead out in the barn. What to do, what to do?

He was conscious that he could not leave things so; but he kept on walking. Keeping to the path that led toward home, he circled the barn, his head turned to one side, and he stared at the yellow blur in the window.

He was twenty steps past the barn when he remembered that Elise had not thanked him for his offer of the farm. With the strange irrationality of a man under pressure, he felt astonishment, and then anger. He had come here to do a kind and generous action; he had been threatened and attacked, and Elise had ordered him out of the house.

The thought steadied him. He went back more carefully and recalled everything that had happened since the trouble had begun. In an instant he could see with dazzling clarity the whole picture of how Jens and Elise had been treating him.

The woman had not been surprised when he told her that he had bought the place. Jens had known it even without being told. It was clear that they had planned on this all along. Why had not Jens been in to town for the sale? He had cunningly stayed away, knowing that his presence might have caused Tollef to change his mind. And there was Jens's offer to rebuild the fence — what else could he have had in his mind except that Tollef was to buy the farm?

They had talked it all over at home — Tollef was sure of it. They had not made the slightest move to find another place to live. Why should they? Tollef would provide. And yet Jens could curse and threaten with a fork, knowing all the while that Tollef would not let him starve.

The discoveries cooled him down. Anxiety about the body lying out in the barn suddenly left him. He put away the thought that if he had not let go of the fork handle at just the right moment . . .

He glanced up toward the house; he could still see, dimly, the figure of Elise sitting by the table. There was no need of telling her anything; she could think what she might. The load was off his shoulders.

He stood for an instant, ready to continue toward home; then, struck by a new idea, he turned swiftly, ran to a rear door of the barn and went in.

The body lay exactly as he had left it. There was the broken fork. And above hung the lantern impartially lighting the scene. Tollef wasted no time; he ran to the stall where the bull was tied; with swift, nervous fingers he loosened the chain and darted out again before the surprised animal had done much more than sniff at him.

Summer once more; and Tollef had come home from the fields. While he was in the barn, a car drew up in front of the house, so quietly that he could not hear it. A man of middle age, clearly not a farmer, jumped out, looking appraisingly about him.

Close beside the house a few trees provided shade. Under the trees a woman of some fifty years, with nearly white hair, sat in an old rocker. On the ground at her feet lay a ball of woollen yarn. At intervals she remembered the work in her hands and set to work at it with swift intentness. She was knitting a man's winter sock.

"Good evening. Is this Mr. Larson's residence?"

"Larson?" Her rocking ceased, and she looked puzzled. "No. Larson's live over there." She pointed vaguely and resumed her knitting.

"Oh." The man was surprised. "They told me Tollef Larson lived here."

"No. We live here." She looked up, smiling serenely. "I'm just waiting for Jens to come in to supper."

"Jens?"

"My man Jens," she offered. "He's out in the barn." Suddenly her rocking stopped again, and her knitting dropped forgotten from her lap. "In the barn," she whispered, a queer, cold look crossing her face as she stared unseeingly before her. "I don't know what he's doing out there so long."

Tollef came hurrying up, eyeing the stranger with hostility and suspicion. Seeing Tollef, the woman rose, a sudden desperate fear in her expression. "He's out in the barn," she cried hoarsely. "Tell him to come in."

A door opened and closed. Marta came swiftly out, anxiously scrutinizing Elise; but her voice, when she spoke, was quiet and gentle, showing no trace of her feeling: "Supper's ready, Elise."

Elise turned quickly, and her voice was that of a half convinced child. "But I'm waiting for Jens."

"He ate half an hour ago and went out to do some work. You've forgotten, Elise."

The words brought comfort; Elise smiled happily. She allowed herself to be led inside, leaving the two men facing one another.

"I didn't understand," said the stranger. "I'm sorry." There was no reply from the silent man opposite, and presently the stranger began awkwardly to explain his errand. "I found out you hold title to the eighty over there"—he nodded in an easterly direction—"and I thought I'd stop in and find out what it's worth to you. I own the next two forties, and with your eighty I'd have a square quarter section."

"Yes," said Tollef slowly, "I own it." He looked away. "I had to buy it when it was foreclosed, so's Jens and Elise wouldn't lose their home."

"Oh." The stranger understood. "Jens—that was her husband?" He nodded toward the house.

"They had no place to go," Tollef explained. "I had to do something to help them out. They didn't know I had bought the place until I went over to tell them. And that

same evening," he went on steadily, looking far out over the fields, "while Jens was out doing chores the barn caught fire."

"And he burned to death? How did it happen?"

"Nobody knows." There was a pause so slight as to be almost imperceptible. "Maybe some of the cattle got loose and knocked down the lantern."

The stranger shook his head sympathetically. "That's awful," he muttered. "He must have tried to put it out and got caught in there."

"Yes," said Tollef evenly, "that's likely it."

ON THE ROAD

(Two Poems)

By HANIEL LONG

WEEK-END

Now that it's Easter, I have left the college
And my classes, and come to a little place in the Blue Ridge;
And I have found a young fellow here who likes mountains
More than he does teachers. Yet we have become friends
In the quiet of falling snow, in this world
Where I am no longer a teacher, and he is no longer a
student.

Playing cards by the fire, pausing for stories,
We agree that all this teaching and learning means nothing
to people.

Neither of us has any money; but what does it matter
While miles of mountains and snowy fir-trees
With a hearth in the midst of them, become ours forever?

RETURNING TO THE CITY IN THE AUTUMN

Workmen were making a concrete road
Towards Atlanta, and building a new bridge
At Hornell. Each delay was a chance
To go slow, smell the air, see
Asters and salvias dance,
And the first naked flame
Burn in a maple tree.

We turned to the south.
The blue haze grew deeper
And the sun hotter.
Torrents of wind lashed the car.
I saw a barn with a binder and reaper;
I saw pastures, and ricks, and pens,
Stubble fields, red maples in glens.

There was a detour east
To Friendship, on a dirt road;
Five miles of beautiful slow going
Through color and vista;
Five miles I could not measure
Where I knew everything worth knowing.

The last fields were cut, the fruit
Was being gathered, the root
Withdrew its life once more.
The gale tore at the car,
The hills rose higher,
The haze was blue, and bluer,
The maples streamed with fire.

VINEGAR BERRIES

By F. M. OSBORNE

Old Sam Janney and Grandpa Kemp were loafing in Jake Barnhart's kitchen when Orlo Green came around the corner of the house at a dog trot and opened the door. He had to lean against the wall and puff a while before he could speak. It was quite a climb up to Jake's place and he had taken it on the run. The kitchen was very hot, and the tobacco juice that had frozen in his beard began to thaw and dribble down on his mackinaw.

The boys never had seen Orlo so stirred up before, so they knew something out of the way had happened. But they didn't make a move; just sat around waiting for him to get his breath back. Then Jake thought to hand him the cider jug. "This is good for the voice," he said. Orlo needed two big pulls before any words came.

"That Delia's gone and sold Charlie's press behind his back," he panted. "Sent him over to Amy's yesterday on purpose. He won't be here till the late bus."

Grandpa Kemp spoke first: "Who's gettin' it?"

"That new fellow on the Hatch place, Burton. He's coming down the road now."

The men got out of their chairs and began wrapping themselves up. Jake fixed the drafts on the chunk stove, and the four of them started over to Old Charlie Pascoe's. There never was much excitement on the Hill, and this was past all believing. They felt they had to see for themselves. They reached the road just as young Burton came up with his team and wagon, so they climbed aboard and rode along to the Pascoe farm. Sure enough, when they drove in there was Delia, with Charlie's second girl Maggie, waiting in the barn door. The women paid no attention to anybody but the Burton fellow. Delia was big and husky, so she helped him load the chopper on; then they took the press apart and carried it out piece by piece, even the platform. But the gasoline engine was too heavy for them. Burton

asked the men to lend a hand, and they all helped to hoist it on the wagon.

Grandpa Kemp thought that ought to thaw Delia a little, so he asked her when Charlie'd decided to sell the press. "What do you want to know for?" she asked back. She headed toward the east side of the house then, and they saw the cellar doors had been opened. After Delia and Maggie and the new fellow had disappeared down the steps, Old Sam Janney guessed the rest of them might as well mosey over and see what she was up to now.

"Can't imagine what," said Orlo, "unless she's going to tap one of Charlie's barrels to cinch the sale."

"Not Delia," said Jake.

When they walked into the front cellar they could hardly believe their eyes. Young Burton had stuck a piece of hose into the bung-hole of a barrel, and was letting the hard cider gurgle away down the drain-pipe. It made Orlo and Sam feel weak in the middle. Grandpa Kemp's mouth began to drool at the corners. It was too much even for Jake; he couldn't stand by and watch good liquor being thrown away like that. "What'll you sell it for?" he asked Delia.

"I'm not prospering off the vile stuff," she snapped. Then she thrust her heavy face toward the three men and added, sanctimoniously: "I can't have that sort of money on my soul."

But it took more than that to squelch Jake. "What you selling the press for then?" he asked.

"Mr. Burton's going into the vinegar business."

That gave Jake a big laugh. "I'm on," he said. "I know all about making vinegar, and how you have to keep on tasting it to find out if the juice has soured yet."

The old boys snickered at that. Jake was a smart fellow all right, Orlo thought. He nudged Sam in the ribs and nodded toward young Burton so he could notice how red the fellow's ears were getting.

They felt thirstier and thirstier as the sharp smell of the cider filled the cellar. But they couldn't break away. Jake

knew it was just adding to Delia's enjoyment to see them standing around feeling bad, too. He could tell by the way her thin mouth was cramped up that she was all smiles inside. As soon as the third barrel was emptied, they filed out. Not a word was spoken until they were settled around the stove again in Jake's kitchen.

"Somebody ought to watch for Charlie, so as to prepare him," said Sam Janney.

"That's fair enough," said Jake; "you tell him."

But Sam said he'd rather be shot first, and Grandpa Kemp and Orlo said they felt the same way about it.

"Well, just sit around on your hams awhile, boys," said Jake, "and I bet he'll show up here some ten minutes after he gets on the Hill. That'll give him three minutes to find out the barrels are empty, and a good five for hell-raising with Delia." He did some silent calculating. "The bus gets to the corner at four-fifty. We've got a full hour to wait."

He put some pine sticks and a big chunk of chestnut in the stove, then went into the back room and brought out a fresh jug of cider. Orlo took a plug of Yankee Prime out of his pants pocket and handed it around.

"There ought to be a law passed protecting a man from his grown girls," said Sam, as the cider warmed him.

"From all women past twenty," Jake corrected.

"If Delia's Egbert hadn't died Charlie'd still be batching it like you."

"It's the only life, boys."

"The girls worked it slick on him about Delia's coming. Waiting till he was off to the Bantam Winter Fair, so she could move in bag and baggage."

"I was to the Fair with him," said Sam. "Judas, how mad he was when he found it out."

"Maybe he'll get so riled up about the cider he'll make her leave," suggested Grandpa hopefully.

"Not Charlie," said Jake. "Delia's got him scared. Told him she could easy get a lawyer to prove he needed taking care of."

"Damn that woman," said Sam.

"Amen," said Orlo.

"Drink on it," said Jake. The jug went round again.

"Know what ailed Delia's Egbert?" asked Sam.

"Maybe he just got all worn out waiting for her to go first," Orlo answered. "My woman says she's liable to bad spells with her heart. They come on sudden in the night."

"They must leave just as sudden," said Jake, "from the healthy look of her. I bet she weighs two hundred, and she can't be more than forty-five."

"She made Charlie move into the room next hers and leave his door open so's he could hear if she called. She's got some kind of medicine the Doc put up special."

"You don't mean it," said Jake, all interest. "Has he ever had to do it?"

"Twice now."

The others pricked up their ears. This was good news. Maybe there was some hope for Charlie after all.

"Did your woman say how dangerous these spells were, Orlo?"

"Not that I remember. Know about such things, Jake?"

"Nope. But I bet she's just putting it all on for Charlie's benefit."

The old boys had great faith in Jake's smartness. If he believed she was putting it on, then it was likely the truth. The thought of that depressed them again. They sat in dreary silence for a while, chewing and tippling.

"Cheerio," said Jake finally. "Time's nearly up."

"Give us something to be cheerful over first," suggested Sam.

"Might send Fritz out to get a tom-cat," said Jake, pulling the big dog's ears.

That made the old boys smile. From the time Fritz was a pup, Jake had taught him to catch big toms by the scruff of the neck.

"Wait till Delia finds out about that," said Orlo gloomily; "she'll have the Cruelty to Animals people after you."

"Aw, the dog never hurts them any."

"Makes them spittin' mad though."

"Maybe I should have taught Fritz to catch old gals by the scruff of the neck, instead of tom-cats," said Jake.

That was a good one; they could see the big dog dragging Delia around by the back hair. It was so funny they had to have another drink on it. They forgot about the time then, until the kitchen began to grow dark.

"It's five-twenty to the minute," said Sam looking at his mail-order watch. Jake had been mistaken for once. But maybe Amy had made Charlie stay over another day. Or maybe the bus was late; the roads were pretty bad on account of the freeze-up after the last March thaw. That was it, they decided. Around quarter to six, though, they said they had to be getting along to supper.

"Somebody ought to mosey over to Pascoe's and see what's the matter," Orlo suggested.

"Not me," said Jake.

"Oh, he didn't come," Sam was sure.

"Well, g'night, Jake."

"See you tomorrow."

"So long, boys."

II

But Old Charlie had caught the four-fifty bus after all. He had cut across the pasture so he could come up on the far side of the barn where Delia wouldn't be so apt to see him. He had a pint of applejack in his pocket and he wanted to hide it in the hay. He rolled back the door quietly, and slipped inside the barn. He could feel at once that something was different. He struck a match and looked around. He had to burn three matches before he could believe that the press was gone, engine and all. He began to feel queer in the stomach, and thought he was going to be sick. But he knew he'd get over that as soon as he'd had a drink of cider. He had forgotten all about the bottle in his pocket. Without bothering to close the barn he slunk across the yard, lifted back one of the cellar doors, and crept down

the steps. He struck another match and lit the candle on top of the jelly cupboard. Then he picked up an empty pint jar and held it under a bung.

The strong smell of cider in the place should have warned him. He tried all three barrels before he could believe that his hard cider was gone. Then he could see where it had been running into the drain. His legs began to shake and he felt sick again in the pit of his stomach. He sat on an empty keg until he could get his strength back. He knew well enough that Delia had done this terrible thing to him. She had nagged him and nagged him about his cider drinking, ever since she came early in the winter. But he was too weak now to have a row with her. He knew he must get right out of there or she would come down and find him. He hoisted himself from the keg, pinched out the candle flame, and felt his way along the wall to the cellar steps. The cold wind relieved his dizziness. He crept back to the barn, then turned away again. It wasn't pitch dark yet; someone might come out there. He couldn't bear to see anybody yet. He had to hide some place until the funny feeling in his legs and his head passed off. He slunk around to the stable-yard, and sat down on the old manure pile. Nobody would find him there.

The surety that he would be alone smashed his self control. Tears began to trickle down his cheeks. Then he began to cry in earnest, with big hiccougging sobs. He kept telling himself that a man hadn't ought to do this, that he ought to have more guts, that he had to brace up, but he couldn't stop. He fumbled in his pocket for a handkerchief and found the bottle of jack. At once the tears slowed up. He pulled out the cork and the hot liquor cut his sobs short. He felt ashamed to the very core for having bawled. Then anger rose up in him until his head roared with it. He knew he didn't dare go into the house feeling that way. He guessed he'd better sneak back into the barn and sleep in the haymow. He'd finish the whole bottle too; he didn't care if it killed him.

It was nearing noon when Old Charlie came to himself. He crawled out of the nest he had made in the hay, and held on to a crossbeam while he pulled himself up on his tottery old legs. The hay was full of dried cockle-burrs, and his throat felt as if he had swallowed a bunch of them. His head seemed as big as a bushel basket, too. He thought another drink might fix him up, so he got down on his knees again and pawed around in the hay until he found the apple-jack bottle. The cork was out, and all the liquor was gone. He couldn't remember whether he had finished it, or whether he'd forgotten to put the cork in and it had all run out. The picture of it flowing away brought to mind the emptying of his cider down the cellar drain. But his head felt too heavy to raise hell with Delia just now. He'd have to get a drink from Jake Barnhart first.

He went out through the rear stable door so Delia wouldn't see him, and across the cow yard to the south pasture. He followed the old rail fence to the road, climbed the stone wall, and cut across to Jake's place. Jake was sitting by the kitchen window and saw him coming up the lane. He stuck out his foot and shoved the cider jug under the sink.

"How's the boy?" he asked, as the old fellow stumbled over the sill.

"For God's sake give me your jug," Charlie begged.

Jake looked him over shrewdly. "What you been doing?" he asked.

Charlie told him. His eyes were watery now, and his voice was full of gulps and quavers. "To think my own daughter would do such a thing to me," he kept repeating.

"I can't give you any cider, Charlie," said Jake. "Delia came over this morning and threatened to have the law on me if I did. She knew all about the still in the cellar, and about my making apple-jack and cider brandy and everything. So you can see how she could easy get me into a peck of trouble."

Old Charlie just sat there on the edge of the chair, his hands on his knees, looking up at Jake like some sick animal.

Jake couldn't stand it. "I can't give you any cider, Charlie," he said again, "but I'll do better than that for this once." He went to the cupboard and poured a generous inch of golden-brown liquid into a tumbler. "A hair off the dog that bit you," he said.

Old Charlie was so shaky he had to hold the glass with both hands. He spilled a little on his chin as he gulped the liquor down. "Much obliged, Jake," he said. He took off his sheepskin coat, laid it across his knees, and began picking at the dried clover heads and cockle-burrs.

Jake didn't know what to say to the old fellow. He felt so sorry for him he was fairly sick himself. If Delia'd only been a man now, he'd get the old horse-whip out of the barn and give her more than a touch of it. A fitting punishment for a woman like that would be to shove her in one of those empty cider barrels and roll her down the hill. He smiled at the thought of it. He must remember to tell that one to the boys; they'd appreciate it right enough. What was Delia after, anyway? Did she want to kill the old fellow off? Charlie must be pretty well fixed. Now that the rich city folks had gone crazy over this part of the state, land was worth considerable more than it was a few years back. And Charlie had told him he had over twelve thousand dollars in the Bantam Savings Bank; and nearly as much in the Vermont State Bank that the girls didn't know anything about. He wondered if the old boy had made a will. He wondered if he hadn't better speak to him about it some day soon. It would serve them right if he left it to an Old Man's Home, or a Haven for Drunkards. Maybe he could give him a hint. If he had a couple of doctors for witnesses the girls wouldn't be able to prove he wasn't in his right senses, either. The poor old coot, sitting there picking hay off his coat. He wished he knew what to say to him.

Suddenly a wonderful idea came into his head. "Why don't you see if Doc Brader won't order you to take some kind of liquor for medicine, Charlie? I heard he did that for Old Man Chitten."

Charlie brightened up at once. "That so?" he asked. "Maybe I'll go down tomorrow. Maybe you would go along."

"Sure I will." The old fellow began to look so much chirpier Jake felt he must keep on jollyng him. "About Delia now, Charlie. She's a slick one; but you just show her you can be slicker. You'll get ahead of her in some way if you just put your mind on it. Keep thinking it over and you'll hit on something. Begin thinking right now."

The idea appealed to Old Charlie. "She's a real Pascoe," he said, "and they were all slick ones. But I've been a Pascoe considerable longer than she has. I'll show her." He managed a feeble grin.

"That's the stuff," said Jake.

Old Charlie put on his coat and started back to his own place. From the window Jake watched him picking his way down the lane. The poor old coot, he said to himself again. Before Delia came he'd been the spryest old man on the Hill. Now, in this short time, he seemed much feebler than his seventy years allowed. Jake thanked the Lord that he was forty and single.

Sam and Orlo and Grandpa Kemp came over late in the afternoon. None of them had seen Charlie, and they felt a little bashful about stopping in at his place. But they thought Jake might have some news. Delia had talked to their wives that morning too, and the women had read the riot act to the old fellows. They were feeling pretty glum. Jake remembered to tell them about rolling Delia down the hill in a cider barrel, and that cheered them up. Grandpa laughed until he choked and had to be pounded on the back. When that didn't stop him, they made him drink some water. He was huffy for a while then. "You've gone and spoilt my record," he told them. He'd been boasting all over the village that he hadn't tasted water since last August.

They sat around hoping Charlie would show up; but when five o'clock came around without him, they thought they'd better move on. Jake said he guessed he'd hoof it down the

hill and catch the Bantam bus. He'd seen in the paper that Hoot Gibson was to be at the Opera House in a movie called *The Bandit from Red Eye*. He thought he'd like to take Charlie along, but he hadn't any appetite for a tongue lashing from Delia. "The poor old cuss," he said out loud as he passed the farm on his way down the hill; he mustn't forget to remind him about going to Doc Brader, when he came over tomorrow.

But Jake didn't get a chance to talk to Charlie for some time, and neither did the others. They would see him hanging around the barn or walking in the orchard, and would wave to him, but he never made a move to come their way. He acted sort of ashamed, they all thought; and as if he wanted to keep away from them. What Delia had done seemed to have taken the guts right out of him.

"My woman heard down in the village that Charlie was getting a little queer in the head," Orlo reported one day.

"He was sitting in the barn door when I passed by only yesterday," Sam chipped in, "and I'd swear he was talking to himself. I called to him, but he didn't seem to notice."

"Hell," said Jake; "he was likely talking to one of the cats. I bet all you boys would get more than a little crazy in the head if you'd gone without a drink as long as Charlie has."

Jake kept worrying over the gossip, just the same. He didn't like the smell of it at all. The poor old son of a gun; he felt he ought to do something for him, but he didn't know what. Early in the following week though, as he was going down the hill to meet some fellows in Jensen's Garage, he met Charlie coming up. The old man had his head down and acted as if he didn't want to see him, but Jake ran right square into him and made him stop.

"How's the boy?" he asked.

"Pretty good."

"When are we going to see Doc Brader?"

"She won't let me."

"My God, Charlie, you didn't tell Delia about it, did you?"

"She guessed it. That woman. She knows everything that goes on. I feel I daren't even think about anything." His voice got shrill. "I wish to God something would happen to her. I wish to God it would. I wish to God —"

"Easy, Charlie, easy," said Jake, putting a hand on his shoulder. The old man's plight got him in the middle. He wondered if there could be a grain of truth in what Orlo's wife had heard in the village. He looked a lot older and walked all huddled together; he was thin as a rail too.

"I can't do a thing," Charlie quavered. "She knows all that goes on. All but one, that is."

"What one's that?"

"I ain't telling anybody."

Jake thought he saw a light. "Where d'you keep it, Charlie?"

"In the bottom drawer of my bureau. Hid under some clippings."

Jake gave a big laugh, and slapped him on the back. "God bless the boy," he said. "Sure it's safe there?"

"It was there right enough when I went to bed last night." He looked at Jake craftily. "You think you know what it is, but you don't. You'd never guess it in a month of Sundays either. You told me to think up something. Well, I did it. She may be a slick one, but I'm slicker. I'm just biding my time now."

"That's the spirit, Charlie." Damn those gabbling women, Jake said to himself. The old boy was all right, of course. The fellows in the garage could wait awhile; he didn't want to leave Charlie just yet.

"How's the orchard coming?" he asked. "Going to get a good crop this summer?"

They climbed over the stone wall and cut through the pasture to the apple trees. The melting of the frost in the ground made it spongy; the ledge was slippery, and water

seeped up through the big patches of moss when they stepped on them. They halted under a group of Baldwins.

"Due to get a good lot of vinegar berries off these, if we don't have a late frost," said Old Charlie, squinting up through the branches.

"The Winesaps and Northern Spies look pretty good too," said Jake.

"The Early Goldens will be ready for pies in another few weeks if they get the sun."

"I could do with a big hunk right now."

Old Charlie gave a gulp at that. "I ain't tasted pie since last Fall," he said; "nor had any fried cakes or griddles all winter either. Nothing that's good."

"But what does she feed you, Charlie?"

"Soft eggs and oatmeal and milk and suchlike," the old man answered bitterly. "Hog swill, that's all it is." He raised his voice. "She's trying to kill me off," he squealed.

"Brace up, boy," said Jake quietly, grasping Charlie's shoulder with one hand. But his other fist was clenched. No wonder the old fellow was so skinny, starving him like that. By God, he was going to do something about this. He'd feed him up over at his place for one thing. But he must calm him now. "How're the Russets coming on?" he asked.

Charlie pointed to the four trees. "They bear the best vinegar berries of the lot," he said.

"You bet you," said Jake. "Bully for apple-jack too. How about letting me take care of the crop, Charlie? On shares — you know what I mean." He gave the old fellow a poke in the belly with his elbow.

They grinned at each other. Then Charlie's face fell. "Delia'll guess it."

"To hell with Delia. Lots of things can happen between now and October."

"That's so."

"I've got to mosey on down the hill now, Charlie. See

you tomorrow. Don't let her find out what you've got upstairs."

"She ain't smelled a rat yet," the old man chuckled.

III

Jake was eating ham and eggs right out of the skillet, a few mornings later, when Old Charlie burst into the kitchen. He was in his shirt sleeves, and hadn't put on a hat. "Delia's gone," he gasped.

"Hooray," cried Jake, tossing up his knife and fork.

"I mean she's dead, not gone visiting."

Jake just tilted his chair back, reached under the sink, and brought out the jug of cider. "Fortify yourself with that," he said, handing it over.

Old Charlie didn't need to be told twice. He tipped up the jug and could feel his strength flowing back into him as he drank. His brain cleared right away. "I want you should go to the village and bring up Widow Statton and her boy before the girls get here. I heard she's looking for a place. Tell her I'll give any wages she wants. I got plenty."

"Sure, Charlie; I'll have the Ford out in a jiffy. Told anybody else about Delia?"

"Orlo Green's woman; she'll see to it that the girls get word."

"How'd it happen, Charlie?"

"I woke up natural, and knew it was awful late. I looked for Delia and there she was, half out of bed. One of her heart spells, I guess. But I hadn't heard a thing, not a thing."

"Sure she's gone?"

"I didn't step in, but I could tell she's gone all right. I didn't hear a sound of it, though."

Jake put on his hat and went out to the barn, Fritz at his heels. Old Charlie said he'd go just as soon as he'd had another swig. But he had three more pulls at the jug before he could get started back to his own place. The house

seemed to be full of women, upstairs and down. He snooped around in the pantry, cut himself some bread and smoked beef, and carried it outdoors. He wanted to be on hand when Jake got there with the Widow Statton.

The hullabaloo, as the old boys called it, wasn't over with for nearly three days. Maggie and Amy wouldn't let Charlie leave the farm, but he stayed in the barn and the kitchen as much as he could. Jake had seen to it that he was kept pretty well fortified. Now everything was over. The neighbors had left, and the girls had just driven off. Delia was gone too, Charlie remembered. Poor Delia, he said to himself. She'd meant well enough by him, but her way of looking at things wasn't his way at all. That had been the trouble from the first; and she wouldn't give in to him a smitch. She didn't understand how a man had to have his cider. And giving him nothing strengthening to eat, just slop for sick folks, just as if she wanted him to get sick; and a man had to protect himself, didn't he? But he mustn't let himself think about it any more; it made the blood pound in his head too much . . . It was wonderful Spring weather they were having. He'd go for a walk through the orchard, he guessed. This was supposed to be an apple year. The trees ought to yield a good crop of vinegar berries. Always made Delia mad when he called them that, instead of apples. Always thinking of his cider, she'd say. He'd have to get Jake to help him buy another press some time this summer. And Jake had said something about his making a will, too. He'd see to that soon.

As he neared the house he could smell the potatoes frying for supper. The Widow Statton was an awful good cook, he'd heard. She was a nice woman, and her boy Tad was the smartest little chap for his nine years he'd ever seen. They seemed pleased enough to come up there and live on his place. The girls couldn't get a lawyer now to prove he needed taking care of. He'd been too slick for them about that. Golly, how hungry he was. And tired. A good kind of tired though.

A little after eight Mrs. Statton lit the lamp for him in his room upstairs. He thought he could almost go to sleep standing up with his boots on, he was that worn out. He was glad Jake had told him about making a will. If the Widow stayed on, she and Tad could have the home place and a parcel of land and the savings in the Vermont State Bank. He guessed the other savings and a sizable woodlot apiece ought to be enough for the girls. Amy's husband wasn't as good a provider as Maggie's; he'd give her the pick of the woodlots.

Old Charlie blew out the lamp, climbed into bed with his underclothes on, and stretched out his tired old legs. He was glad he'd never again have to wear one of those pesky nightshirts Delia'd made for him. He could go around looking just as slack as he pleased now. He was glad too that Jake was going to remember all that stuff about the will for him. But it seemed like there was something important he was forgetting. Something he had to do himself. He must think before he dropped clear off . . . Oh, yes . . . He crawled out, half asleep, groped his way to the bureau, and opened the bottom drawer . . .

It wasn't until he was climbing into bed again that things came back to him clearly. He chuckled a little in his throat. Then he reached up and pulled two thick wads of cotton out of his ears. He'd never have to go to all that bother again. He'd been a slicker Pascoe than Delia after all. Poor Delia. She'd meant well enough, he guessed. She'd been a good daughter to him according to her lights. As he dozed off, he wondered if she knew any different now.

CANVASSERS NEAT APPEARING

By HAROLD CROGHAN

CANVASSERS NEAT APPEARING for old established company, 85 W. Monroe, 2nd floor.

This was the block. Nettle walked along reading the signs, reading the numbers. BAKED sugar cured HAM SANDWICHES liberal in size 15 cents . . . Blackmoor Hats . . . 79 . . . Ties 55c. Two for \$1 . . . 83 . . . 85. A heavy door, a long dim stair.

Last night Ann had got to crying again. "What are we going to do? Max, what's going to become of us?" He didn't know what was going to become of them. He had fifty cents left and a car slug. He said he would get a job peddling something. "All right I'll get a job peddling something." What else was there to do?

He had tried to get a job. He had tried everything. Getting "interviews," answering questions, bluffing. Filing applications. Education. Age. Married or single. Who was your last employer? Answering blind ads. "Dear Sir May I apply for the vacancy advertised . . . for references as to my . . ."

Dreary pictures lay upon his mind like sour food rotting in a sick man. Himself walking the loop, haunting the agencies, talking big. The flat that he left every morning, Ann waking up as he left, her fat face blotched with sleep, the little girl asleep on the couch under a stained grey blanket, the smell of the stale coffee that he had heated . . .

There was a legend on the frosted glass of the door. Switt's Silkeen Hosiery. This was the place. He went in. There were other men sitting about. A blond girl sat at a desk behind a typewriter. She was very blond and very pretty. Nettle found a chair beside an old man who kept opening and shutting his mouth and swallowing. Nettle felt ashamed. He felt desperately ashamed.

A big man came out from an inner office. He was a Jew. He looked kind. He had a huge nose and a long

sad face. He said, "My God what a show up. This one is all right." He nodded toward Nessel. "Fix him a sample case." He looked around at the other men. He shook his head and went back into his office. The others wouldn't do. They weren't neat enough to peddle stockings. There was one kid whose pants were too short. He was picking his nose.

The others went out. They weren't neat appearing. Nessel went to the desk. The girl asked him his name, and where he lived. She typed his name and address on a card and pushed it into the cover of a sample case. It was a small sample case, covered with oil cloth. She said, "Good luck." She was very pretty. She said, "Work north of Wilson Avenue and west of Broadway."

So he took a Broadway car. He got off at Lawrence and walked west. He wanted to smoke before he tried the first apartment building. He was nervous. He didn't have any cigarettes. He had only forty three cents after paying car fare. He sure wanted to smoke, though.

Well, here goes, he said to himself. And he went into the building. The door inside the entrance was locked. He pressed the call button beside one of the mail boxes. He spoke into the speaking tube, "This is a man representing—" and then he couldn't remember the company. He couldn't remember it to save himself. A woman's voice kept saying, "What?"

Anyway she buzzed the catch and he got inside. He said a little prayer. He said, "I hope to God I sell the stockings. I am representing Switt's Silken Hosiery." He must remember to say that. He said the sentence over to himself.

He started on the first floor. "No I don't want any." That was all the answer he got. Some of them wouldn't open the door. He said his prayer again, "I hope to God I sell the stockings."

He went up to the second floor. He had a spent sense of futility, a kind of weary unease. He often had the feeling nowadays. It meant that he was a washout.

He tried every door as he went down the corridor, back and forth across the hall. I am doing my best, he said to himself. I am trying every door. 203 said, "Get away from there." He went to 204. "Who is it?" "I am representing Switt's Silkeen Hosiery." A girl opened the door. She leaned against it. She had beautiful silvery hair pulled back over her ears. She had an angular, pretty, Finnish sort of face. She smiled broadly and the smile pushed higher the tight round firmness of her cheeks. "Nah, I ain't got no money. I work here cleaning the apartments. What you fellows all doing selling things?"

Well, they had good looking maids in the apartment. He went to 205. A tiny thin old woman answered 205. She had a very cultured voice. "No, thanks. No, thank you. I shouldn't be interested."

He rang the bell at 206. A little boy with blue eyes and stick-out ears looked out. The door was only opened a little, there was a chain across inside. "Mother there's a man here." "Tell him we don't want anything." He saw her through the narrow opening. She was a big young woman in a house dress. She was what they called buxom. She smiled a sweet smile, a nice wide smile, at the kid. "Shut the door, dear." The little boy shut the door.

He was going to ring 207 when the janitor came after him.

"No peddling, brother."

"I'm not peddling."

"Well all right, get out."

So Nessle went out. It was getting stormy looking. Nessle turned up the collar of his coat. He saw his reflection in the window of the dress shop on the ground floor of the building. His face was drawn down, and white.

It was hard on him doing this. He used to have good jobs.

He bought a pack of cigarettes in the drug store at the corner. That left twenty-eight cents. He looked at himself again in the mirror behind the soda fountain. This

was himself, Nettle, running around with a pack of sample stockings. Getting kicked out of apartment buildings. Down to the last pennies, too. His face had a funny expression. He looked pretty tough.

He wondered, could he really be tough? He hated to leave the drug store.

He hated to find out that he couldn't sell the stockings. That was the size of it.

It was raining now. He stood at the door and looked out into the street. It was a quiet street. Now and then a car went by slapping the wet pavement.

There was an apartment building across the street. It was a swell looking place with a green design in stone across the façade. He pictured himself crossing the street and going in through the door. It was hard to leave the drug store.

Finally he did cross the street. He got pretty wet.

The inner door of the apartment building was wide open. That seemed like a good sign. He wanted to feel hopeful. He said to himself, "My God let that be a good sign. I got to sell these stockings."

A colored fellow was mopping the tiled floor. He said, "Do you live here mister?"

"No I don't live here."

"I guess you're selling something ain't you mister?"

"Well what about it?"

"You can't go upstairs. That's what about it." He was a smart aleck nigger.

Nettle went out into the street. He walked close to the buildings trying to keep out of the rain. He didn't know where he was going. He just walked along. He felt cold. Jeesh he felt cold and hopeless. He felt desperate. Those goddam stockings. He knew he couldn't sell them. He went past a restaurant. A fat woman in a white apron was looking out the window. Nettle came back and went into the restaurant.

He felt desperate. Well all right he felt desperate. What good did it do to feel desperate?

There was a strip of mirror behind the cigar counter. Wasn't he white. He didn't ever remember being so interested in his face. He was white enough to scare a person. He guessed he would drink a cup of coffee and think. It was good to be out of the rain. Sometimes they charged a dime for coffee. He had a notion to ask the woman. But he didn't. She would sure think he was a bum if he said, "How much is coffee?" He sat on a stool. "Black coffee, please."

A taxi driver was sitting at the counter. There wasn't anybody else in the restaurant.

The coffee was too hot to drink. He stirred some sugar into it. The woman was back behind the cigar counter near the cash register. Ever so often she looked at him. She was very dark. Her face was pitted with pock marks like a Mexican's. He used to know Mexicans at the plant whose faces were pitted like that.

I can't get a job. I can't peddle stockings. What shall I do? That's the way his thoughts ran.

Then he said to himself, by God I'll do something. I sure will.

The woman gave him a check for five cents. He felt grateful. But she was watching him, looking pretty sour. She didn't like his looks. He had got a job, hadn't he, because he was neat appearing? Maybe he wasn't neat appearing now. Running around in the rain wasn't going to make anybody very neat appearing.

It was raining hard now. The rain was running crooked lines down the window. He could run to the car line and go home. When he got home he would have sixteen cents. Maybe Ann had got something more at McManus's.

No. He wouldn't go home with sixteen cents.

Nessle drank the coffee, and lighted a cigarette. Wouldn't Ann open her eyes if he brought home a pocket full of money? He used to have a nice little roll of bills when he cashed his check on Friday nights.

Here he was, sitting here, letting things run through his mind.

If he had guts he would do something. He would do something desperate.

If he had guts he would hold up old pit face.

Sin? Dishonest? What the hell. God wouldn't let him sell a pair of stockings. Maybe he didn't have the nerve though. Probably he didn't have the nerve. He didn't have the nerve to try the stockings any more.

He might be going kind of crazy. He didn't have a gun. Maybe though it wasn't such a crazy idea. Here were only two people. One of them was a woman. He watched the taxi driver. He looked like all taxi drivers. They always looked dirty. Broken down, run over shoes. Hard guys. Wise guys. It was funny how taxi drivers all looked alike. The fellow was eating another piece of pie. Look at the bites he was taking. Nessel dropped his cigarette into his cup. It went sodden in a little pool of brown liquid. It looked nasty.

It was sure raining. It was just pouring down.

All right, old pit face, watch me. She had one eye that was funny. Sort of milky looking and funny. What did they call that kind of an eye?

Nessel got off the stool. He said to himself I'm going to hold you up, old pit face. Yes sir, he was going to do it. He was going to hold up the place without a gun. His heart was beating so hard it jarred him. It made his head bob. An enormous pulse was beating in his throat. He felt sorry for himself. He was so scared he felt sorry for himself.

Nessel laid the sample case open upon the cigar counter. "Could I interest you in these stockings?"

"No, you couldn't interest me." She punched a key of the cash register. "05" popped up. The drawer came open with a little crash, and a jingle of coins.

"These stockings are cheap. If you would be interested. I'm flat. I'm what you might say flat." He said to himself, if she looks at them nice I won't try this stunt.

"No. Take them off the counter."

The taxi driver got down off his stool and came over to the counter. "What you peddling?" He reached over and got the case. He stretched out a woman's stocking. It was a huge, obscene thing, stretched out. "Is there legs like that?"

They laughed. They were sure tickled, the taxi fellow and the woman. Nessle stepped back. He dug his right hand into his coat pocket. They thought he was a joke. "All right!" He had said that too loud. Jeess, he was sure shaking all over. "All right you." He spoke to the driver. "I got a gun on you. Lie down." The man looked scared. Nessle pushed forward two fingers of the hand that was in his pocket and the bulge projected straight and hard. "Lie down!"

The man lay down.

"Over on your face."

He rolled over. The thumping of his feet on the floor sounded loud. It was so still in the room.

Now the woman. She didn't look scared. She was watching him intently. Her eyes looked hard at the bulge in his coat pocket. "You lousy little bastard!" No she wasn't scared.

"So I'm a lousy little bastard." He swore at her. "Get away from the 'phone. Put up your hands!" He was almost screaming. But she wouldn't put up her hands. He wished to God he had a gun.

She wouldn't put up her hands. She reached for the 'phone. "You ain't got a gun." She had the receiver off. "Don't try to hit me you little rat. I knew you was phony the minute you come in." She backed against the wall hugging the telephone close. Now she would call the police.

He thought, Oh my God now what's going to happen to me? I did it in desperation. Now what's going to happen to me?

The taxi driver was getting to his feet. His nose was black. His forehead was black. He looked funny on his hands and knees, looking up at Nessle. He looked like he was playing something.

Nessle felt weak and numb. He felt that it wasn't true. It wasn't true that he had tried to hold up a restaurant. He was a neat appearing man who went out to sell stockings.

He might be going crazy. He kicked the driver in the face. That was a cruel, a crazy thing to do. He couldn't see very well. He must be going crazy. Why did he kick the driver? It was the damn fat woman. Old pit face. She was the one. "You old bitch. I'll get you." And he meant it too.

He didn't remember opening the door. The first thing he knew he was in the street, in the rain, running.

He ran for blocks.

He kept telling himself, I'm all right. I'm all right. They won't catch me. How are they going to find out who it was? And he kept running. People turned to watch him; but there was hardly anybody in the street. The rain hit him in the face. His trouser legs were wet and heavy. They twisted about as he ran.

He didn't feel so tired. But his breath roared. And how his heart pounded. It was horrible the way it thumped, thumped. He must get a long way. He would run down this alley.

How were they going to find out who it was?

"Well how about the sample case?" It sounded like somebody spoke in his ear. "The sample case is back in the restaurant."

The sample case had his name on a card inside the cover, and his address.

He stood stock still. He would be arrested. That seemed incredible. Had he been born for that?

He was tired now. How his heart thumped. His head dropped forward a bit. A trickle of water ran off his hat brim.

BUCOLIC WEDDING

By JACK O'CONNOR

I

I didn't want to go to Winnie's wedding anyway. But mother insisted.

"Don't act so superior, Bill," she said, "After all they're our folks even if they aren't our kind. And they are good Christian people even if they are . . . "

Here she hesitated.

"Country?" I supplied.

"Even if they do lack polish," she ended somewhat lamely.

Well, I didn't want to hurt mother's feelings, so I went in to dress. It made me pretty mad, though. There was to be a poker party that night at Cedric's house. He had a batch of home brew on ice that was more than ten days old. And besides I was off of Aunt Milly and Uncle Tom Workman and their whole tribe since Uncle Tom had prayed for me thirty minutes straight in the First Baptist Church. That was two years ago and I hadn't been in the place since. It had got about at the time that I had been drinking home brew and batting around with the blond operator at the Elite Beautie Shoppe.

Uncle Tom and Aunt Milly were mother's first cousins. Uncle Tom had been a farmer in Tennessee most of his life but he had sold out six or seven years before and had come to Arizona to spend his last days in the sunshine.

Winnie, who was to be married, was his oldest girl. After going through the local normal school she had taught a couple of years, and now she was going to hook up with Will Spense, a blacksmith and automobile mechanic. Winnie wasn't so keen in my estimation. She had liver spots on her face and a cast in one eye, but Will wasn't so hot himself. He was a little guy with the sense of a prairie dog and the strength of a Hereford bull. They had been engaged since their high school days and for years they had gone to church

and to all the B. Y. P. U. picnics together. Will had a partnership with his father and Winnie had saved six hundred dollars, so they were pretty well fixed.

Will was what people in my home town call a steady boy. He put in ten hours a day at the shop, saved his money, went to church five times a week, read the Bible, and snitched on the bootleggers. He was without bad habits: he didn't even smoke. But still there was kind of a wild crazy streak in his family. Old Man Spense, his father, used to get the shouts during a hot sermon, and once he even ran up and down the aisles on all fours barking like a dog and foaming at the mouth. I was just a little shaver at the time and it scared me half to death. I dreamed about it at night for more than a year and woke up sweating and yelling for my mother. He was also what I learned afterwards was a pyromaniac. He was the captain of the volunteer fire company and whenever a fire broke out he charged about like a crazy man, rushing pell-mell into burning buildings and taking awful chances to save almost worthless articles. Everyone thought he was a hero for a long time, but finally the rumor got around that he started the fires himself. Nothing was done about it, though, because a chimney fell on him during a fire about that time and injured his spine. He never could walk very well after that but whenever a fire bell rang he snorted and reared like a bull smelling blood.

II

The last thing mother told me when we got in the Ford and drove off was not to act superior.

"Now Bill," she said, "just because you have been in the Navy and have had a year at the University, don't get the big head. Join in the fun when we get to Uncle Tom's and be one of the party."

I said I would and we drove off.

It was seven thirty when we got there. The sun was down but it was still hot as hell. All the Baptists for miles around were milling about on Uncle Tom's lawn. The men had

taken off their coats and the women wore light-colored organdie dresses. Everyone was sweating and uncomfortable.

Though some attempt had been made to rig up the parlor for the wedding, it wore its usual funereal air. Bible verses, mouldy pressed flowers in glass frames, photographs of fresh graves, and crayon enlargements of dead relatives decorated the walls. Fifteen or twenty chairs had been placed around the wall and on them the older people sat, looking self-conscious and stifled. The Rev. Parks, the Baptist preacher, went among them, wiping the sweat off his red face with a purple silk handkerchief, slapping backs, and making ponderously pure jokes.

Winnie was not present. She was evidently all excited about the wedding, as we could hear her sobs coming from the bedroom mixed with Aunt Milly's low tones of comfort.

I could see Will stalking about in the front yard, nervously rattling a handful of silver dollars in the pocket of his blue serge pants. It made me feel up-town and superior to see his country clothes. I was all the more conscious of my twenty-dollar white flannels and of the fraternity pin on my white shirt.

A little breeze sprang up, moving the cheap lace curtains at the windows and bringing with it the smell of rotten grapes in Uncle Tom's vineyard. If Uncle Tom had not been so good I would have thought he was making wine. But no chance . . . I reflected somewhat bitterly on the cold beer I was missing by not being at Cedric's.

Pretty soon the preacher said, "Brother Workman, shall we get the ceremony over?"

Uncle Tom said he guessed so and scurried off to bring Winnie and Aunt Milly in. Winnie's white organdie dress was mussed and her eyes were swollen. When Will came in she was afraid to look at him and both of them blushed red as beets. I could hear Will's breathing while the preacher put on his seersucker coat and adjusted his glasses.

While the preacher read the ceremony Will looked like Old Man Spense when he heard a fire bell ring. If ever a man was in a twit about getting married it was Will Spense.

After the wedding was over and the giggling Baptist boys had all kissed the embarrassed bride, we had angel food cake and homemade peach ice cream. I didn't have much use for Aunt Milly but that didn't interfere with the enjoyment of the food. Cake and ice cream were Aunt Milly's long suits. Like most country women she liked to see people eat, and she bustled about among her guests like an old hen with a fresh batch of chicks, clucking and fussing.

It was cooler now. I ate a second helping and began to feel tolerably happy. One of the girls at the wedding wasn't so bad, I decided, so I went over by her and began to talk. Her name was Jean Babcock and her folks had moved out to Arizona because one of her brothers had T. B.

I was still sitting there when Ike Gillman and the Baptist preacher came over to where I was.

"Bill," they said, "we're going to kidnap Will and we want you to help us."

"What's the big idea?" I asked.

"Oh, heck, we always take the groom away at a wedding. They expect it. It's more fun!"

"I'll bet," I said.

"Well, are you with us or ain't you?" asked Ike.

"I guess you can count me out."

"Come on, Bill," said the preacher, "We were counting on you. You see, Will Spense is a blacksmith and very strong. You are the biggest fellow here and we thought you were the only one to handle him."

Jean looked up at me just then with her pretty brown eyes.

"Please help them, Bill," she pled, "You're so big and strong."

Perhaps that decided me, or perhaps I remembered that mother had told me not to be high-hat. At least I told them I'd help them.

III

Will's car was standing by the front gate. It ran all right but it was an antique and no mistake — a 1912 Cadillac that had once belonged to the President of the Ranchmen's and

Miners' Bank who had got sent to the State pen at Florence when the slump came and the bank went busted after the War. It had been in the Spense repair shop then, and as no one would pay the repair bill on it, Will fixed it up and had been driving it ever since. Its back end was seven feet from the ground if it was an inch. It had a right-hand drive and the gearshift was on the outside.

There was some bedding and food and stuff like that in the back seat, as Will and Winnie were going camping up in the mountains for their honeymoon.

The newlyweds were talking in low tones and looking over the car when we came up. Knowing the custom of separating the bride and groom after a wedding, they evidently planned a getaway.

The preacher got Will into a conversation and I sneaked up behind him and grabbed him. With my arms locked about him, he could hardly move, and I dragged him to his car and put him in the back seat. I still held him from behind but he kicked and fought as well as he could.

Winnie screamed and the crowd all laughed and shouted. The preacher got into the back seat with us and Ike Gillman started the car and drove off.

The plan was for us to drive to Mesa, a little Mormon town about seven miles away, where a second car was to meet us with Winnie. Then, happily reunited, the newlyweds were to speed rejoicing to the mountains.

Ike drove fast and we were half way to Mesa in a little while. Will stopped struggling so I let him loose and reached in my pocket for a cigarette.

When I had it lit and looked up again Will had a big pocket knife in his hand. He was smiling but his eyes had that crazy Spense look in them.

"All right, you," he said, "I'm going to cut you into little bitty pieces for taking me away from Winnie."

I tried to be nonchalant but I was pretty scared at that look in his eyes.

"Aw, don't get hard, Will. It's all in fun," I said.

He made a pass at me with the knife then. He was as quick as a cat. I tried to block him, but the knife ripped one leg of my pants open and made a cut six inches long and a quarter of an inch deep.

I felt the blood begin to run and then I *was* scared.

I tried to grab his arm but he made another pass at me and cut a long gash in my ribs before I could get hold of him.

Lord! but he was strong. He worked his hands loose a little and cut my wrist in a dozen places with little short jabs. I was never so scared in my life.

I yelled for the preacher to help me but all he did was to crowd into the far corner of the seat and say, "Now, Will, Will, don't be angry."

Ike was as scared as the preacher and kept on driving. I cursed them both bitterly but they didn't raise a hand. Every now and then Will would jerk his arm loose and cut me somewhere before I could grab him again. I began to get tired but he was as strong as ever. I bled like a stuck hog but he didn't have a mark. Except for the breath whistling through his teeth not a sound came from him. He worked silently and earnestly and his one idea was to cut the hell out of me.

Finally I remembered that I'd read somewhere that a strong offence was the best defence. So the next time Will broke away from me I swung on him instead of trying to grab him. I hit him right between the eyes and knocked him a little groggy. While he was still dazed I picked up a thermos bottle full of coffee from the bottom of the car and crowned him with it. It broke to pieces, cutting his scalp and spilling coffee all over the three of us in the back seat. But it put Will down for the count and took all the fight out of him.

I took Will's knife away from him and turned to the preacher.

"I don't give a damn if you are the preacher," I said, "You're the yellowest rat I've ever seen."

He didn't say anything. He was as white as a sheet.

"That goes for you too, Ike, you dizzy hick," I said.

But Ike kept on driving.

Will came to just then and before anyone knew what he was about he jumped out of the car and hit his head on the pavement. I could hear the crack above the noise of the motor.

Ike stopped the car as quick as he could and we went back to pick Will up. He was really out this time. One side of his face had all the skin off of it, and one of his ears was swelled up. He was covered with dust, his clothes were torn from the fall, and his eyes were blue and swelling from the blow I had given him.

I was still sore at Ike and the preacher but I felt sorry for Will. He was in a hell of a shape for a wedding night.

We drove on to Mesa then and stopped where we were to meet the others. Will came to. He looked about wildly for a moment and before we could catch him he jumped out of the car and headed down the street home.

As he ran he passed the car with Winnie in it. Everyone yelled at him but he paid no attention. As soon as Ike could start Will's car we went after him but he cut into an alley and got away.

Feeling like damned fools, we went back to the meeting place. Winnie was having a fine case of hysterics and everyone was glum and foolish looking.

Mother was there with the Ford.

"Come on," I said, "Let's get out of this."

"Are you hurt much?" she asked when we got going.

"I'll live," I said.

IV

After I washed and put iodine and bandages on my cuts I felt better and decided to go over to Cedric's for some beer after all. I cranked the Ford and started.

Cedric lived on the street where the Baptist church was and as I drew near it I thought how much I'd like to punch the preacher's nose. My cuts would heal quickly but the pants were a wreck.

Just as I drew near the parsonage I heard screams and thuds and hoarse shouts.

"What the hell?" I thought, stopping the car.

I went quietly up the walk and when I got to the front door I saw Will and the preacher.

Will had the preacher down and he was pounding him for all he was worth. The man of God was bawling like a branded calf.

Every few seconds Will would stop beating him and yell, "What have you done with Winnie? Tell me!"

The poor preacher would gurgie something and then Will would start pounding him again.

I watched them till Will grew tired of the sport and let the preacher up. When he came out on the porch, looking crazily around for someone else to beat up, I made a sneak for it and drove over to Cedric's. I wanted to tell the boys about the evening and I didn't want to get mixed up with Will any more.

The beer was the best I've ever tasted, and I won enough to buy me another pair of pants.

PILGRIMAGE

By EDWIN FORD PIPER

— 1330 —

The way is just a place where people went:
A miry lane mottled with shadowy pools,
A cart track shouldering under bluffs, and bent
By rock and hazel coppice; or where mules
Dappled with freezing slush climb sullenly

The windy ridge, and wintry sunsets meet
 A desolate forest where strong thieves might lie
 Under the rush and rattle of the sleet . . .
 Always the unknown vista, the surprise
 Of Venice, Famagusta, and the graces
 The orient opens unto western eyes,
 The lingua franca, the dark foreign faces.
 New vistas for the soul — terror and lust,
 Beauty of holiness . . . and leprous dust.

— 1930 —

To the muffled drone of the motor
 The highway rocks over hill and hollow:
 Under the eyes of inanities
 The hot dust drifts,
 Smothering moss and fern . . .
Chirr and chatter and drone.
 With sub-human gesture
 Under whirling dust
 A hiker appeals . . .
Chirr . . . drone . . . drone
 The wind reeks of gas and rubber:
 Eyes peer
 Through scratchy dust
 Over dead birds.
Drone . . . drone.
 Out of restlessness into unrest . . .
 Where do we go from here?

TO THE REAR

By WILLIAM MARCH

The company was going to the rear for ten days and the men were in high spirits. They sat waiting for the relief troops to arrive, their packs rolled and their equipment stacked.

Lying flat on one of the wire bunks in the dugout was a boy with an eager, undeveloped face, and weak eyes that were habitually narrowed against sunlight, whose ears crinkled and bent forward like the leaf of a geranium and whose shoulders were high and thin with the sparseness of immaturity. He was Private Ernest Lunham, and before his enlistment he had worked as a soda dispenser in a drug store in Erie, Pa. He was coughing steadily into a soiled handkerchief, his face the color of biscuit dough dusted with ashes. At intervals he would shiver, as if cold, and then he would catch his breath with a surprised, wheezing sound. He had been gassed that afternoon while he and Private Overstreet were gathering firewood for the officers' dugout.

Jimmy Reagan, corporal of the squad, came over to him: "What did the doctor say, Ernie? . . . Why didn't he send you to the hospital?"

Lunham sat up and stared around him, as if unable to remember exactly where he was. Then he began to talk: "When I went in the sick bay, the doctor looked me over and listened to my heart . . . 'So you claim you got gassed?' he asked in an amused voice. 'Yes, sir,' I said. 'How do you explain that when the Germans haven't thrown over any gas for a week?' . . . 'I don't know,' I said. 'I'll tell you how you got gassed,' said the doctor, 'you dipped a cigarrete in iodine and smoked it. Did you think I'd fall for anything like that?' I didn't say anything — it wasn't any use to say anything."

Lunham lay back on the wire bunk, as if exhausted, and breathed heavily. There were red splotches coming on the backs of his hands and on his forearm. His weak eyes pained him. It was with difficulty that he held them open.

"*That's* a bright son of a bitch for you!" said Joe Birmingham; "why didn't you ask him where you'd get a cigarette to put iodine on?"

"I didn't say anything at all," said Lunham, "I just came on out."

Corporal Reagan called Buckner, LaBella and Davey and they whispered quietly. Then he conferred with Birmingham and Overstreet. At last he approached the bunk where Lunham lay.

"You don't have to worry about carrying the clip bags or taking your turn on the *chauchat*," he said. "You don't have to carry anything but your pack."

Max Tolan, the last member of the squad, came off watch and entered the dugout. He was a powerful man, with a nose that flattened to a triangle and nostrils that splayed widely. His lips were thick and calm: they seemed made of a substance somewhat harder, and somewhat less flexible than flesh. For a moment he stared at Lunham quietly. Then, somehow, his lips managed to open: "He don't have to carry that. I'll carry his pack for him," he said.

A little later Lloyd Buckner approached the bed, a package in his hand: "Here are some malted milk tablets I've been saving. You'd better eat them, Ernie—they'll do you good."

Lunham nodded his head, but he did not speak. He wanted more than anything to thank Buckner and Max Tolan and the rest of the men for their kindness, but he was afraid he would start crying and make a fool of himself if he tried to say anything.

At six o'clock the relief troops came and the men moved in single file down the communication trenches that led to the rear.

The trenches widened after awhile and became less deep. On either side were the charred remnants of a grove of trees. Many of the trees had been uprooted in past barrages and lay flat on the ground; many, with dead limbs trailing the parent stem, had split asunder in the shelling, or

snapped halfway up their trunk; but a few of the trees, sapless and black, stood upright in the field, inflexible now in the March wind. The terrain hereabouts was pitted with great shell holes from which the roots of the fallen trees protruded, dry and seasoned.

Overstreet became very excited: "That's the place where Ernie got gassed!" he said. The men stared about them curiously. "That's the very place!" continued Overstreet. ". . . I wanted to go farther back, around Mandray Farm, for the wood; but Ernie thought that this would be as good a place as any; so I said all right, it suited me, if it suited him."

Overstreet hunched his shoulders and scratched his armpits vigorously. Then he started whistling *La Golondrina* through his teeth. He was a stocky lad, with a neck so short and a chest so thick and rounded that people were surprised, upon regarding him closely, to discover that he was not a hunchback. His teeth were infantile and irregular and they grew together in a V shape. His voice, a counter-tenor, was high with a quality of tremulous, penetrating sweetness in it.

"How did Lunham happen to get gassed?" asked Buckner.

"Well, it was this way," said Overstreet. "Ernie thought the dry roots in the shell holes would make good firewood, so he jumped down and began chopping them off. I sat outside and took the roots that he handed up and cut them small enough for the dugout stove." Overstreet was conscious that the whole squad was listening to him attentively.

. . . "Well, sir, while we were working there, a French soldier came running toward us. He was waving his arms about and shouting.—You know how these Frogs act . . . ?" Overstreet turned to his companions. "Sure!" they said . . . "Well, I put down my axe and I said to Ernie: 'What's wrong with him, do you suppose?' and Ernie said: 'He's sore because we're taking this firewood!' . . . Ain't that right, Ernie?" said Overstreet suddenly. Lunham nodded his head, but he did not answer: he was saving his breath for the long march.

"Well," continued Overstreet, "when the Frenchman reached us, he began to talk excitedly and make gestures, but Ernie and me didn't know what it was all about; so finally this Frenchman catches hold of Ernie's arms and tries to drag him out of the shell hole; but Ernie gives him a shove in the face and the Frenchman falls backward into a mud puddle. Ernie and me were laughing like everything by that time, but the Frog kept staring at us in a peculiar way. Finally he seemed to see the joke, because he began laughing too. He made a low bow to Ernie and me and as he turned to go, he blew us each a kiss . . . "

The communicating trench was only waist high now and the men could see the barren fields that stretched interminably on either side. It was seven o'clock, but it was not entirely dark. Then, after a time, the trenches ended in a road that was roofed carefully with a framework of wire netting, over which burlap sacking, painted brown and green, had been thrown.

"What happened after the Frenchman left?" asked Wilbur Davey.

Overstreet, feeling his importance as a narrator, waited a moment before resuming . . . "Well, Ernie went on cutting roots and I went on chopping them up; but after awhile he said to me: 'Say, Al, did that monkeymeat at dinner make you sick?' and I said, 'No, why?' . . . 'Nothing,' said Ernie, 'except I keep tasting it.' Then, about five minutes later, he said to me: 'Al, I'm beginning to feel funny.' 'What's the matter with you?' I asked. 'I don't know,' said Ernie . . . 'I'm going to heave, I think.' I looked down and saw that he had dropped his axe and was leaning against the side of the hole. His face had got gray and his forehead and his lips were sweating like he had a fever . . . 'You better come up here and lay down,' I said; but he didn't answer me . . . 'Listen, Ernie,' I said, 'come on up here with me!'"

Overstreet paused a moment. "When Ernie didn't answer me, I jumped down and lifted him out of the hole. He tried to stand up, but he couldn't make it. "I'm dizzy, Al

. . . dizzy as hell,' he said. Then he fell down and began to heave . . . Well, as we lay there, who should come back but the French soldier. He had a Frog civilian with him this time who spoke English. He told us that the terrain around Verdun had been shelled so many times that the ground was full of old gas. It was dangerous to dig in shell holes, he said, because a man could be gassed before he knew what was happening to him."

Overstreet began to laugh in his high, tremulous voice. "The joke sure was on Ernie and me.— There he was heaving at the top of his voice; and all I could think of to say was: 'We're much obliged to you fellows for telling us.' "

The camouflaged strip ended at last and the troops came out upon the Verdun road. Darkness had settled, and the faces of the men were no longer visible. Joe Birmingham was talking about his hoped for leave. Birmingham was bright eyed and sudden with an alert, intelligent face. His straight hair, parted in the middle, hung upon his forehead like yellow curtains imperfectly drawn. His teeth were strong and brilliantly white and as he talked he moved his hands with quick, nervous gestures. He could read print that was not too difficult and he could sign his name to the pay roll, but that was about all . . .

"And when I get to Paris, the first thing I do will be to round up a dozen of the best looking ladies in town: four blondes, four brunettes and four red heads."

"I wouldn't be caught short if I were you; I wouldn't cut down on women that way!"

Joe paid no attention to Overstreet. "One of the blondes is going to be dressed in purple silk and have on violet perfume. The best looking brunette is going to wear a red dress with pearls sewed down the front of it and be scented up with carnation. The red heads will all wear green dresses and Jockey Club and have lots of lace on their drawers."

"How about a blonde flavored with vanilla?" laughed LaBella.

"I'll take a red head," said Lloyd Buckner, "but, she'll have to wash off the Jockey Club, by God!"

Reagan spoke then: "Don't let them kid you, Joe. If there's anybody in this squad who's particular, it hasn't been brought to my attention."

"Oh, we'll come to your party all right," interposed LaBella; "you can bank on all of us accepting."

Birmingham gave him a friendly shove. "You will like hell come to my party! — If one of my girls got a look at you dirty bums they'd — they'd —" Birmingham paused, groping for the appropriate word.

"Swoon?" suggested Buckner helpfully.

Birmingham looked up mildly: "For Christ sake, Buck! . . . Can't you ever get that off your mind?"

Reagan smiled broadly, but Buckner and LaBella began to shout with laughter. Sergeant Stokes came toward them angrily. "What's going on here?" he demanded; "do you want the Germans to start shelling this road?" . . . LaBella interrupted him. "All right, Doc; all right," he said quietly.

Lunham walked in silence. He was standing the hike better than he had thought possible. He looked at his pack, riding high on Tolan's shoulders, and at Tolan walking firmly, with no sign of fatigue. It was white of Max to carry the extra pack, particularly since his feet blistered easily, as every one knew, and long marches were difficult for him . . . "The fellows sure have been white to me," whispered Lunham softly to himself. He began to feel feverish and from time to time he took a mouthful of water from his canteen.

The men continued to laugh and joke, but they were careful not to raise their voices. Then, after a time, when their muscles were cramped and tired with the burdens they carried, they became silent, one by one, and settled down in earnest for the long march.

The road bent again and ran north and east, and a late moon rose slowly behind a burned farm-house. To the west

Very lights and colored flares were ascending, hanging motionless for a time, and then drifting toward nothingness with a hesitant, languid motion. There came a sound resembling iron wheels jolting over a bridge of unnailed, wooden planks; there was the constant flash of guns along the horizon and the muffled sound of exploding shells.

Birmingham unbuttoned his cartridge belt: "Give 'em hell!" he said excitedly: "I wish I was with you to give the bastards hell!"

"Do you think we're really going back for a rest?" asked Davey.

"That's the dope they're putting out."

Tolan made a gesture of disbelief with his heavy, wooden lips: "That's all bunk about getting a rest."

Eddie LaBella spoke up: "We'll get a rest, all right — in a hick burg with a dozen manure piles and one dirty cafe."

"It might be all right at that," said Birmingham. "Some of these Frog women ain't bad!" He brushed his yellow hair out of his eyes and licked his lips in an exaggerated, sensual way. "Baby! . . . I'll say they're not bad!" Lloyd Buckner stared at him with sudden unconcealed distaste. He seemed on the point of saying something, but changed his mind. He turned his head away.

"The next time they have a war, they'll have to come after me with a machine gun," said Reagan laughingly.

"Some of these Frog women ain't bad," insisted Birmingham; "I'll bet we have just as good a time as we had in Chatillon. I'll bet —"

Buckner whispered something to LaBella behind his hand. LaBella laughed and in turn whispered to Reagan; but Reagan shook his head. "Let him say it!" said Birmingham; "what do I care what he says!"

The early exuberance of the men had disappeared. They were tired now and becoming irritable. Lunham, walking painfully, realized that. He took no part in the conversation. His nausea had returned and he clutched at his belly. "I won't heave again," he kept repeating miserably; "I'll put my mind on something else! . . . I won't heave

again!" He hugged his thin ribs with his elbows and rocked back and forth beside the road. Then he began to retch shrilly. He slipped to the side of the road and pressed his face into a heap of dead leaves that had drifted against a log. When his nausea had passed he felt somewhat stronger. He rose to his feet and stood there swaying. He tried to laugh: "There went Buck's malted milk tablets!" he gasped.

The moon had detached itself from the burned farmhouse and swung now swollen and yellow and low in the sky. The sound of the iron wheels became fainter and at last a turn in the road hid the flashes of the guns from view.

"How long have we been on the road, Jimmy?"

Reagan looked at his watch: "A little better than five hours," he said.

The road rose gradually. The men were feeling the march in earnest now. They shifted their packs and strapped them higher on their shoulders. A rhythmic whirring of motors was heard overhead. Then the sound of the motors ceased and across the face of the moon the bombing plane floated and listened. Sergeant Stokes came running down the road. "Fall out in the fields and lie down!" He stood there swearing excitedly at the men who were slow in obeying: "Don't bunch up like sheep! . . . Spread out and lie down!"

The men stared up at the plane drifting silently above them. "He's got guts flying so low on a bright night," said LaBella. At that moment there came the sharp, quick bark of an anti-aircraft gun, and two flashlights began to play crosswise in the sky. "They'll never get him," said Reagan, "they're firing too high."

Birmingham lifted his quick, excited face: "Shoot hell out of him!" he said. He moved his hands excitedly and bared his white, perfect teeth . . . "Give the bastard hell!"

The plane with motors whirring again was zigzagging up the sky, the gunners firing impotently. In a moment he was lost in the clouds and the guns became silent again, but the flashlights moved across the sky for a long time, crossing

each other and uncrossing with a jerking, mathematical precision.

"They let him get away," wailed Birmingham; "I could shoot that good with a rifle . . . Christ! — They let him get away!"

Buckner could hide his dislike no longer. "You're quite a fire eater when you're safe behind the lines, aren't you?"

Birmingham looked up resentfully. "I've stood enough of your cracks — who the hell are you, anyway? You act like you were Jesus Christ or somebody!"

Before Buckner could answer, Reagan stopped him. Buckner spat in the road. "I can't help it, Jimmy. I've got a belly full of that common little boor, and he might as well know it."

"Who the hell are you?" shouted Birmingham excitedly; "I don't see no bars on your shoulders!"

Overstreet began to laugh in his high, penetrating voice: "That's the idea, Joe. Don't let him get away with that stuff."

"What I said goes for you too!" said Buckner coldly.

LaBella narrowed his eyes and pursed up his lips, as if denying beforehand the malice in his purposed remark: "At least Buckner can read and write. He didn't have to get the drill corporal to recite General Orders out loud until he memorized them."

Birmingham's alert little face twisted suddenly. He was eternally conscious of his illiteracy, and ashamed of it.

Wilbur Davey, who spoke rarely, spoke now: "That was a dirty crack to make, LaBella."

Reagan turned, his customary good nature gone: "Pipe down, all of you, or I'll report the whole squad when we get in." But the men paid little attention to him. They continued to quarrel for a long time.

Presently the column turned from the main road and took a road to the left. The ground was rising sharply now, and the hills of Verdun were imminent and threatening ahead. Lunham raised his canteen and drank the last of his water. Then, as he returned the canteen to its cover and adjusted

his belt, he noticed that Tolan had begun to limp. A feeling of despair came over him. In terror he leaned forward and touched Tolan's arm: "We'll get paid when we get to the rear, Max, and I got four months coming." Tolan turned, a slight frown on his primitive features, but he did not answer. "I won't forget about you carrying my pack," he continued, "you can be sure of that." But Tolan continued to limp painfully, giving no sign that he heard. "I won't forget about you being so white, Max. We'll go out pay night and spend every franc of that money." Lunham paused, his face frightened and abject. "What do you say, Max? — What do you say to that?" Tolan regarded him in silence, steadily. His round blue eyes were interested and bright. Then he sighed and shook his head doubtfully.

The company was falling out beside an abandoned village and a young officer, on horseback, came clattering down the road. "There's running water in the wash house to the left of the square, if you want to fill your canteens," he said, as if he were reading from a book. It was apparent that speaking to men made him nervous and self-conscious. Overstreet made a derisive, sucking sound with his lips and repeated a strong phrase. The young officer's blush could almost be felt. He ignored the remark and a moment later he could be heard delivering his message farther down the line.

Tolan had swung Lunham's pack to the ground and sat regarding it stolidly . . . "Honest to God! Max, we'll spend every franc of that money. We'll have a fine time, all right!" Tolan seemed to be turning the matter over in his mind. His heavy lips opened once or twice, but no words came from them. Then he picked up the pack and laid it regretfully in front of Lunham. "My feet hurt too bad," he said.

The load on Lunham's shoulders was a hand, heavy and insistent, to tug at his breath and draw him gradually backward. His heart began to pump alarmingly and the veins in his neck were taut and swollen . . . "Christ! . . . Christ!" he gasped.

After that he lost all feeling of time, all idea of direction and all sense of his individual identity. He was aware only of feet moving over the surface of the road in an irregular pattern and of men quarreling continuously. He seemed detached and no longer a part of his surroundings, and gradually he possessed the power to stand outside his body and to survey himself and his companions impersonally: There was Reagan shuffling doggedly, his dreamy, impractical eyes tired and serious; there was Max Tolan with ankles turned outward, flinching each time his feet touched the road; La-Bella, cheap and flashy, his theatric prettiness caked with dirt and streaked with sweat. He saw Overstreet, his triangular mouth open and his infantile teeth displayed; and Lloyd Buckner's deeply curved nose thrust forward, his light eyes cold and sullen. Only Davey walked with dignity and only Birmingham's wiry body seemed impervious to the weight he carried or the steady tug of the miles.

Without warning Lunham staggered and lurched forward. Somebody shoved him into his proper place. He righted himself with difficulty, confused . . . uncertain. "My mouth tastes salty . . . " he said in a frightened voice. Reagan regarded him closely: "You've started bleeding," he said. Lunham pressed the back of his hand against his mouth and then withdrew it. "You're bleeding, all right," said Buckner . . . The feet of the men were hardly clearing the roadbed. They shuffled in a monotonous rhythm, while the moon hung low in the sky, near to setting, and from the west there came the smell of fresh water.

" . . . Why can't he take his turn carrying the clip bags?"

"He's sick, Eddie. You wouldn't ask him to do that when he's sick . . . " Reagan's voice seemed to come from a great distance.

Davey made one of his rare speeches: "I guess he's no sicker than anybody else."

" . . . If he was gassed, why didn't they send him to a hospital?"

The knowledge that his comrades were discussing him gradually penetrated Lunham's consciousness. He realized now that they had been talking about him for a long time . . . Birmingham laughed: "He might fool us, but he didn't fool that doctor at the sick bay none."

The road curved to the right and circled the base of a hill. The young liaison officer came galloping down the road again. The moon had set and there was an indefinite feeling of day break in the air. "Fall out for fifteen minutes before you start climbing the hill," he said. He repeated the order firmly. If the men tried to razz him this time, they'd find out very quickly who he was. But the men remained silent, perversely ignoring him. They fell to the ground gratefully. Tolan took off his shoes and began to pour water on his blistered feet. Davey was already asleep and snoring softly, but Birmingham and Buckner continued their quarrel. The liaison officer rode away regretfully.

Lunham lay on his back and stared at the sky turning faintly gray toward the east. An imperative drowsiness was overpowering him, but some impulse made him struggle against it. With eyes closed, and lips half parted, his thin face and wilting ears seemed doubly immature and pathetic.

The men were talking again, their voices coming from a distance remote and blurred . . . "Why can't Lunham take his turn on the clip bags?" LaBella's voice was flat and toneless . . . And Overstreet, petulant: "By God! he's no sicker than anybody else." There came a thud on the earth beside him and Lunham knew that the clip bags lay before him. He began to laugh suddenly. "I never heard anything so silly," he thought; "I can't lift those bags, let alone carry them up the hill . . ."

He turned on his face and pressed his body against the cool, damp earth. The feel of the soil against his cheek steadied him and gave him strength and gradually the cloudiness that had obscured his mind disappeared. He was conscious of his body paining him unbearably. He drew up his arms and pressed his hands against his burning lungs. He began to think, against his will, of many things: of his

enlistment, his eagerness, his romantic thoughts concerning noble deaths and imperishable ideas. Then, in justification of himself, he tried to recall one noble thing that he had seen or done since his enlistment, but he could remember nothing except pain, filth, and servile degradation . . . "By God, they sold me out!" he thought . . . "The things they said were all lies!" . . . He lay trembling at his discovery, his eyes closed, his lips opening and shutting silently. Then an unbearable sense of disgust came over him. He reached for the rifle that lay beside him, surprised to realize that the thought had been in his mind for a long time, and stood bending forward clumsily, his mouth swaying above the barrel as he tried patiently to spring the trigger with his foot.

Joe Birmingham was coming toward him shouting a warning. "Look out! — Look out!" he cried. The two men struggling for the rifle stumbled back and forth beside the road. The entire squad was on its feet now, but it was Wilbur Davey who wrenched the rifle from Lunham's weak hands and flung it far into the valley below. Then he slapped Lunham smartly on both cheeks. He said: "What the hell? What you trying to pull off? . . . Do you want to get court martialed?"

Lunham had fallen to the road and lay with his face pressed into the dirt, but the men paid no further attention to him. He beat the earth with his fists and cried in a weak childish voice. "Oh Christ! . . . Oh Christ almighty!" . . . he said over and over.

The first light, new and hard, came over the tops of the hills and cast strange shadows on the faces of the men. In a farmyard, somewhere, a cock crew, and below in the valley mist hung above the fields. Word came down the line for the men to fall in. They rose stiffly and put on their equipment. Lunham did not rise. He lay limp and relaxed, his arms outstretched, and as he lay there he could hear his comrades climbing the hill: he heard their hard breathing and their grumbling voices. He heard the irregular shuffle of their feet, the clink of a canteen and the creaking of a

leather strap . . . but after awhile even these sounds became faint and vanished, and he was alone.

Presently a peasant woman carrying a wicker basket strapped to her back and leading a she-goat with a distended udder, paused on her way to market and stood regarding Lunham with uncertainty. The she-goat, feeling the rope slacken, approached cautiously and nibbled his uniform, twitching her sensitive muzzle and baring her yellow teeth, but the woman jerked the cord and the goat moved away. Lunham turned and lifted his head heavily. He was still bleeding — a thin, insistent stream that would not stop — and where his mouth had rested there was a pool of blood that the earth had not entirely absorbed.

From her basket the woman took a metal cup and got down upon her knees, the she-goat spreading her hind-quarters obediently. When the cup was full, the woman lifted Lunham's head and held it to his lips, but the milk was tepid, with a rank smell, and after he had swallowed a portion of it, he rose suddenly to his knees and swayed dizzily from side to side, his face white and dead, his hands splayed like the claws of a hawk. Then he tried deperately to stand upright, but his knees collapsed under him and he fell flat on his face and vomited with a hoarse, screaming sound.

The woman stretched out her arms and raised them slowly sidewise with a gesture singularly frustrate, and as she raised her arms the handle of the cup turned on her finger and the milk ran over its edge and spilled into the road . . . but Lunham lay stretched on his back, his face and hands covered with sweat, his thin body trembling . . . "Let me alone," he said . . . "let me alone, for Christ's sake." . . . The woman had risen and stood regarding him with stupid, compassionate eyes. She shook her head sadly. "*Je ne comprends pas!*" she said.

In the valley a farm-boy shouted to his team, a dog barked on a high, pure note and a flock of rooks, flying swiftly, dropped silently into a field.

THE SKETCH BOOK

OUTING

By ADA S. PHILPOT

Martha Clapp stood on the kitchen stoop and rang the big farm bell for dinner. She looked anxiously across the field of young wheat that disappeared in a distant fold of the hills of Iowa. She often lost Jonas in that field. Suddenly a small figure appeared out of the brown earth, and dodged around a corner of the big red barn.

She called, "Dinner, Jonas — boiled dinner!" She was not sure he heard her, even then.

Jonas took time to shove some swill to the pigs, shy a stone at his neighbor Thompson's hens, and drink a dipper of water at the pump, before he slumped into his seat opposite Martha. He found his food a little cold, but he had hectored his wife a good deal.

The farmer devoted himself to the boiled dinner; once he kicked the cat; once he growled for the vinegar jug. His wife was on her feet several times.

Jonas looked small, weazened and drab, as though nature favored him as little as she did her weeds, dock and fennel. He was a silent man. The awful thing about Jonas was an expression that never changed. How tell what was going on under his ridged walnut exterior?

Martha's fine head of a Roman matron would not have been amiss on a coin of the Empire. Her face, at fifty, still displayed a fine durable shine without a wrinkle. But there was a dullness in her eyes, and the corners of her mouth, after thirty years of apprenticeship to Jonas, turned down. She was besieged by two fears: the fear of God on the one hand, and the fear of Jonas on the other. She feared for her own salvation if she did not save Jonas.

Behind the breastwork of boiled dinner and hot mince pie, Martha opened up an offensive. She laid her pastry on the table and retired to the pantry. How account to her maker for the mince pie that she gave into the hands of her hungry husband? Jonas set to.

"Jonas," issued Martha's determined sing-song from the pantry. "I've had an invite to visit cousin Sally's folks in Chicago, ever since John was a baby. For twenty-five years I've heard tell of Chicago and seen hits on it in the newspapers. And now that the children are all married, I was aimin' — I was aimin' — to start at six in the morning."

Jonas lifted his head from feeding, with his fork suspended in the air; he was listening. To steady herself, his wife grasped the pantry door. "I've stood your glumness for thirty years. And if I didn't ever answer back you may lay it to my getting right down on my knees and praying — yes, morning, noon and night, Jonas, just like my mother did. And we've eaten skim milk and sold all the cream for thirty years. If I could be at the junction a good half hour early in case the train passes before train-time."

A ridge in the man's face opened. Jonas was thinking about the worst year in wheat that he had had for thirty years: drought, and frost, and ergot, high wages, and stacked wheat burned by a farmhand's cigarette-stump. He mentioned, "My chewing tobacco cut down half. We're all going to the poor house. Not a cent — not a cent." Jonas rarely talked so long. "Not a cent."

For this Martha was prepared. "I've rag money. If I hadn't the dollars I kept back when I sold the cabbages to the commission man: now don't call me a thief. I always got more a dozen than you ever. I don't never put a thing on my back. You was always gen'rouser than you meant to be." Martha studied the brush on the back of her husband's head. "The Thompson girl will cook for you. You been to Chicago yourself, Pa. I heard you say you looked it over before settlin' in Iowa."

Why quote the blasphemy that soiled Jonas' lips? He thought little of travel. "Hens that lay thur aigs in other people's barnyards be damned."

Martha, in clearing away the dinner dishes, broke two of her willow-ware cups; but she knelt that night as usual to pray for Jonas. That sinner discharged his cowhide boots one after the other, violently saying, "Dang it — I mean

her!" His case was hopeless if the Lord happened to be on his wife's side. Hardly more disastrous was the prophet's trump to the walls of Jericho than Jonas's groan to Martha. Jonas groaned.

In the morning, the farmer did not drive his wife to the junction. This was done by the neighbor Thompson's boy. As the train gave a jerk, Jonas' head appeared in the car window. "The bay mare has glanders!" he said.

"Glanders!" called Martha. "Frogs and a plague of darkness! You have only yourself to blame." She retired like a jack in the box.

Jonas groaned. There was no one by to hear. It was a relief to Jonas to have nobody in the house whom he was obliged to bully. For the coming Sunday sermon, Jonas saw posted the notice, "Can a moral man be saved?" But he had no need to hide behind the corncrib during church time. There was no Martha to reproach him. He sat on the wood pile in the sunshine and smoked delicious pipes. He began and ended the day of rest in consuming his wife's mince meat made into pies, the only decent dish concocted by the Thompson girl.

It was in May that Martha began her outing. June sunshine and strawberries made a sinful world better. June wheat promised to keep its faith with the farmer, when Martha Clapp walked in, after two weeks, with an alpaca duster and a hamper on her arm, to find Jonas sousing his head in the kitchen sink.

"Thought somebody'd stole ye," was his welcome.

Martha was as fresh as a breath of spring as she opened her hamper, gurgling, "Mushmelons, Jonas — little honey ones."

"I'll bet they're puckery," he sniffed.

"Well, if that's what you want —" she said with a whisk of her body like the sorrel mare let out to pasture. Her husband cut a melon over the wood-box. He could have enjoyed a second. According to his habit of thirty years, he hauled off his boots, and settled, deaf and dumb, with his farm paper, by the unlighted stove.

Martha hung her alpaca duster in the stair closet and folded her barège veil; then she went to survey the pantry. "Glasses and saucers all mixed up on the lower shelf where I stack the dinner plates. That Thompson girl's a dumb fool!" Martha boiled the kettle, and poured a cup of tea, ignoring Jonas.

Jonas hitched up a chair. "Like a pick-up myself, evenings."

Martha started to spurt. "It's alarming, crossing the street corners to Chicago . . . This kitchen needs white-washing . . . I'm going to have a rummage sale. Saw one to Chicago . . . Decoration Day, people on State Street — dandelions weren't a spot on 'em. I walked an' I walked . . . Almost forgot I had any children. Saw myself in a store window. Who's that woman, thinks I? Where've I seen that bunnet? Ioway wasn't a hole in the doughnut now. Felt just like a Chicagoan." Martha closed her eyes. "Them high buildings to heaven — sacrilegious I call 'em. And all the noise. But I got all cleared up . . . felt dreadful happy . . . could almost call it God. Didn't know Chicago was like that," Martha chuckled. "The hired men at the hotel doors think they're some."

Jonas snickered, and stumped across the kitchen in his stocking feet to fill his pipe. The talk streamed on. He settled himself and opened his farm paper. "Brindle cow's dropped her calf." Then he was lost to the world.

Martha picked up her darning basket, full, like the widow's cruse of oil. She had left the supper dishes standing. But the pulse of life beat too high for her to pursue the slow stocking weaving. "I'll bet the parlor ain't been aired out since I left."

Going into the front room, she lighted the lamp on the marble top table. The Brussels carpet with its design of ruined pillars and festoons of red roses was elegant, no doubt! That air castle that dripped from the ceiling was a thing of the nineties that she had made herself. Her children hung petrified in crayon portraits on the walls. But this sight was too familiar. She saw through the open door

the man of the house in his inmemorial attitude. Martha no longer needed company. She was having such a good time with herself. She sat down to the melodeon.

Sunday, when the church bell rang, from the front room Jonas heard the playing on the melodeon, a catchy but secular tune. Was Sunday going to ease up thus?

Martha strutted to her pew attired in her new purple foulard. It had, running riot all over it, a very wicked green curlycue, at the sight of which the little Sill's boy, who was a very nervous child, made a sour face.

The stiff couples who courted down the shady river path that afternoon witnessed their townswoman rowing herself in an old punt. This sight was seen by Jonas through the willows. He inspected his wife under his bushy eyebrows across the supper table and was inspired by her new gown to say, "Corn needs rain at eighty cents a bushel. Suppose you pray, Martha."

Martha giggled. "Rain will rot Thompson's hay stacks. May the Clapps be exalted, and the Thompsons laid low, oh Lord!"

"Mean cuss — Thompson!" growled Jonas.

"Jonas, you're fit to make a body die laughing."

"Don't see no funniness nohow," whined Jonas.

The women's weekly prayer meeting was held on Thursday after Martha's return. This little town in Iowa had moral boundary lines that were like regular rail fences. Here a wild young man loomed as high as a meeting house steeple. A circus was permitted to tarry in the township only one day. The salvation of souls was a self-conscious virtue like the display of a double pansy.

Martha read the scripture lesson as follows: "'But the fearful and unbelieving and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.' Revelation 21:8." Martha shut her false teeth with a click, and glanced around at the pale wan faces of many of her farm neighbors' wives who eschewed powder and lip stick. "Sisters, from

the look on your faces I don't believe you need fire and brimstone. I reckon there's a God of happy and feel good: a God of the taste of the strawberry, and of the song of the bobolink, as well as a God of Hell. Lord! How we women are shriveling up for want of a sense of humor."

"Martha, I believe I hear you don't believe in a hell. He-he-he!" Jonas greeted his wife that evening.

Martha glared at Jonas. "Jonas, did you make the universe?"

Jonas said "No." He had not made the universe.

"Well, nor I either. But it isn't going to be the same as it used to be. The world is funnier now. I seen Chicago. I seen no use of a hell . . . Nor of being afeered of you, Jonas. I feel cleared up, I seen the humor of it."

To Jonas a joke was a serious thing. He waggled his head. Martha giggled. "Jonas, you're the funniest sight a mortal woman even seen. I can't abide you no longer. The Lord's got to look after you and your salvation."

Jonas tiptoed down the steps of the kitchen stoop, and did not groan until he reached the woodpile. Here he sat down in a heap. "By the living, jumping Moses!"

The cows stuck their wet noses through the barnyard rails and blew on him. It was milking time. Jonas mused: Martha now believed in dance music on Sunday, in rowing on the pond . . . There was to be no more Hell. It looked more tolerable for a sinner like Jonas. He formulated a long sentence.

"I mought a guv in to her salvation long ago, ef she hadn't dared me to be damned with her piosity, so to speak. Um! Um! She's so darned jokey lately . . . I wouldn't wonder ef Marthy's a little wicked too — as well as me." Jonas said a surprising thing. "I'm not goin' to be afeerd of Marthy, no longer — not by Crickey."

Martha stole into the woodshed and pecked at her husband's little shrunken figure seated on the woodpile. "I do declare," she said. "If Jonas don't look so measly, I'm most sorry for him." Now to pity Jonas was the beginning of wisdom. "I'm not going to be afeerd of God no longer — nor yet of Jonas. I've had my get-away."

EMERGENCE

By FLORA J. ARNSTEIN

Open large doors upon studded hills,
That the eagles may stalk forth —
Eagles bearing upon crucified wings
The pine trees' burden,
The lighted cones, the mountain ritual;
That down the clefts
The wingéd ones may slant,
Sails brushing the rock —
Down gullies, down to dry river-beds,
Where carven lizards, petrified, still breathe,
Palpitant — one with the eagles' breast-lift,
The heat-releasing canyons,
The systole and diastole of hills and valleys.

INCORRIGIBLE

By DAVID CORNEL DE JONG

No, I was not too much a fool,
Just a stranger fingering the sod
To know its quickening, and with a fear
That Aaron's blooming rod
Grew from a mind too rustic.
They scrutinized my wayward turn,
And thudded through their bentless measures,
Constructing fetters for my arrogant concern.

I held a concourse with a leaf
To know its falling. They severed me
From magnitude with one companion,
The God who molded the decree
That mangled Bethel's children.
I looked and saw a spider suck a fly,
And from that moment's bloodiness discerned
That for such things His mirth was far too high.

NOTE: The two poems on this page were wrongly attributed in the last issue of THE MIDLAND. They are reprinted here with my sincere apology.

THE EDITOR.

BIOGRAPHICAL

FREDERIC TEN HOOR has been a frequent contributor to THE MIDLAND. He lives at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

ALBERT STENGELSEN, F. M. OSBORNE, and JACK O'CONNOR are alike new contributors and each is represented in this issue of THE MIDLAND by his first published short story. Mr. Stengelsen lives in Detroit; Miss Osborne at New Preston, Connecticut; and Mr. O'Connor at Alpine, Texas. Mr. O'Connor's novel, *Conquest*, was published by Harper's last year.

The poems of HANIEL LONG and EDWIN FORD PIPER are well known to readers of earlier volumes of THE MIDLAND. Mr. Long is now living in Santa Fe. Mr. Piper is professor of English at the State University of Iowa. His most recent volume of poems, *Paint Rock Road*, was published by MacMillan.

WILLIAM MARCH will be remembered by readers of THE MIDLAND for his stories "Fifteen from Company K" and "The Little Wife", published in 1930.

ADA S. PHILPOT and HAROLD CROGHAN are Chicago writers. This is Mrs. Philpot's first published story. Mr. Croghan has been a frequent contributor to THE MIDLAND.

I'VE BEEN READING —

By JOHN T. FREDERICK

WORLD WITHOUT END

Three years ago, a slender book of prose called *As It Was* and signed "H. T." was published in England. A copy came to my hands and I found it a wonderfully fresh and honest book, one which impressed me profoundly. It was the story of the acquaintance and love and the early life together of the poet Edward Thomas and his wife. A sequel was promised, but it appeared in England only after a long delay, in the form of another little book called *World Without End*. Harper's have now published the two parts in one volume under the title *World Without End*, by Helen Thomas (\$2).

This book seems to me quite certain to have a permanent place in our minor literature of books about writers. It will hold this place not only because of its intimate portrayal of a man who is worth knowing well, but for what it is in its own right. Simplicity of style, forthrightness, and utter lack of self-consciousness make this the most refreshing record of emotional experience which has come to my hands in a long time. It is a book which I fear may stimulate the blurb-writing tendencies of some reviewers to an unfortunate degree, for it is a book which may easily be overpraised for qualities which are not its best. I believe, however, that it will survive even the indiscretions of its admirers.

OF MODERN MASTERS

Axel's Castle, by Edmund Wilson, (Scribner's, \$2.50) is a group of related essays on the more important figures in our imaginative literature since 1870. It seems to me quite the most helpful and readable book in this field which has come to my hands. Wilson is a skilled and urbane writer and he has a wide range of interests and sympathies. He has, moreover, a valid motive in his criticism. He really wants to make the books and writers he is talking about intelligible and interesting and significant to his readers. His essays on Gertrude Stein and on Joyce are especially admirable; and no matter how little or how much one may have read in or about these writers, he will find something to be grateful for in Wilson's coolly sympathetic analyses.

Wilson is no humanist. He is concerned with showing what the writers he discusses have sought to do, and how and why. He has only by implication questioned the worth-whileness of their doing it at all. I could wish, however, that he had permitted a little more of his own personality to appear through the pages of these essays. I would be glad for a more concrete record of his own experience of some of the books he discusses, for criticism more frankly in terms of Edmund Wilson's emotions. I think such enrichment need not get in the way of the clear and immensely helpful interpretation which he has now given us; and I think it might add something of vigor and drive which would lift his book out of the realm of even the best commentary into that of writing to be permanently valued for its own sake.

FROM THE ANTIPODES

The new book of modern sailing ship experience, by A. J. Villiers, tells the story of the grain trade between Australia and the British Isles, and especially gives the narrative of one voyage. It has the attractive title, *By Way of Cape Horn* (Holt, \$3.50). My son says this is not nearly so good a book as Villiers' *Falmouth for Orders*, and I respect his opinion since he has read the earlier volume several times. But I find *By Way of Cape Horn* fascinating and genuine, though a little overwritten in spots. I fear we may see the seed of Mr. Villiers' artistic destruction in this slight evidence of a tendency to sensationalize his material — and also in the popular acclaim he has received as a lecturer! I fear that there is a real chance that he will never write another *Falmouth for Orders*. Meanwhile, here is a real seagoing experience for landlubbers.

The Island of Penguins, by Cherry Kearton, (McBride, \$3) is a readable account of the life and habits of the hosts of penguins that nest in a small island in the South Atlantic. The book makes no pretensions to literary distinction, but I found it an enjoyable record of careful observation. Incidentally, it is an amusing volume to companion on the shelf Anatole France's *Penguin Island*.

RADICAL POETRY

I have read with much interest the little volume called *Unrest: The Rebel Poets*, Anthology for 1930 ("Studies" Publications, 224 W. Pacemont Rd., Columbus, Ohio, \$1.00). This book shows again that when social controversy is involved, the concrete outweighs the abstract so far as literary interpretation is concerned. Frederic Cover with his miner, Robert Gates with his mill worker, Norman Macleod with his "Saw Mill Sketch", attain real emotional impact and succeed in penetrating the indifference or prejudice of the reader to arouse a new awareness of significant experience in the present day industrial scene. Most of the more expressly revolutionary and more propagandist poems, on the other hand, are weak or negative in their effect. It is simply a fact that the abstract statement of an emotion does not convey that emotion to a reader. Obtrusive propagandist intention usually destroys the power of the poem. There are exceptions to this general statement in the anthology, however. One such is James Rorty's "Warning", an arresting and unforgettable piece of work.

THE MIND OF YOUTH

The most interesting novels which have come to my hands recently are three in which the experience of childhood and youth is given new and highly significant expression. Nelson Antrim Crawford's *Unhappy Wind* (Coward-McCann, \$2.50) is a strongly individual book. It shows on every page, in every sentence, the loving care of a real artist, and as a whole it is a brilliant achievement. In the whole literature of childhood there is no other book just like this, for Mr. Crawford has interpreted with real success a new region of experience. His central character is a sensitive and idealistic boy whose world attains its peculiar individualness because of the fact that all sensory impressions translate themselves in his mind into terms of color. Smells, tastes, sounds, tactual impressions, become pinks, purples, browns, clear yellows, as he experiences them. I believe that for most of us this same thing happens, although only occasionally or vaguely; hence this full-length interpretation of a person of peculiar sensitiveness in this respect has a very definite psychological interest for all readers, and the highest significance for a few.

Mr. Crawford's novel has many other claims upon our consideration, however. It traces in very sympathetic fashion the religious experience of a sensitive and sheltered boy. The people who appear in its pages are fully realized with amazing economy. Altogether, here is a book which will have no wide popular appeal but which no serious student of our developing fiction can afford to overlook.

Philip Stevenson's *The Gospel According to St. Luke's* (Longmans-Green, \$2.50) is a study of boyhood, adolescence, and youth, built upon an original and ambitious plan. Mr. Stevenson takes a group of boys upon their entrance in a private school and traces them through their years there and on into college. His book is

interesting in method because he is concerned not with one boy or with two or three boys, but with a much larger group. The point of view shifts from one to another of a considerable number. The reader is first sharing the experience of the sheltered and sensitive youngster who has to find himself through participation in games; then that of the boy whose whole school life is shaped by his previous home experience; then that of the potential poet, and so on through a large number of widely differing individuals. The same characters appear again and again, however, and of course the incidents are interlocked because they present experiences which the boys share in very large measure. Hence, the book has a degree of unity which would at first thought not seem possible.

I have the feeling as I read the book that some of the incidents and characters might have well been treated more fully. I believe I would welcome a somewhat richer rendering of many of these incidents. On the other hand, it seems to me definitely a mistake to carry the story of these boys past the completion of their preparatory school experience. It seems to me that the book would have gained greatly in unity of effect if it had ended with the graduation of the boys who are presented as beginners in the opening chapters.

Yet, some of these boys and many of the incidents remain powerfully impressive after the reading of the novel. Philip Stevenson writes with the most extraordinary comprehension and sympathy. Few novelists have written of one boy so understandingly as he has written of many. This book has social and psychological importance as an interpretation of the interaction of developing personalities under the circumstances of boarding school life. It has greater significance, I think, for the individual reader as a valid piece of fictional experience which will serve to illuminate one's own life, as well as that of the boys he knows.

Black Cherries, by Grace Stone Coates, (Knopf, \$2.50) is an amazing first novel. Its quality will come as no surprise to readers of *THE MIDLAND* who have read her stories which have appeared in recent volumes; I am sure, however, that the effect of this book as a whole will exceed the expectations even of those who have been enthusiastic about Mrs. Coates' work, as I have been. I think the special quality which distinguishes this novel from all others I have read recently is its genuine poetic richness. The child who is presented in most of these stories is of a truly poetic nature and her experience is poetic experience. It is the triumph of the novel that the elusive special qualities of the little girl are presented without robbing her of earthy and human reality.

The novel has great interest apart from its central character. A family, and particularly a father, are powerfully presented.

Most first novels are autobiographical. This one is only slightly so. Perhaps that is an added reason for feeling great confidence in Mrs. Coates' future achievement.

FOLKSAY

Mr. Botkin has brought together in a beautifully printed volume, *Folksay, 1930* (University of Oklahoma Press, \$5), a richly varied collection of valuable material from the old and the new southwest: sketches of "old timers", collections of riddles and folk remedies, a full-length account of a tent show, stories of magic and witchcraft. It is very easy to see that the contributors to the volume do better work when they present the material itself than when they generalize, theorize, or discuss. The general articles are much less worthy of attention, and of the admirable typography of this volume, than are the folk materials themselves. These are of permanent interest and make the book a prized addition to my library.

POETRY FROM DISTINGUISHED HANDS

The Viking Press has issued a beautifully printed and bound new edition of the charming poems for children by Elizabeth Madox Roberts, *Under the Tree* (\$2.50). The illustrations add little to the poems, but are sympathetic and pleasing. The binding and typography are charming.

I opened Mark Van Doren's first long poem, *Jonathan Gentry*, (A. & C. Boni, \$2.50) with great eagerness, for I have been much impressed by some of the shorter poems of Mr. Van Doren. I am extremely sorry to report that I am somewhat disappointed. I do not find the book as a whole a satisfying experience. Part III, "Foreclosure", is a grimly significant poem of contemporary life which presents in strongly dramatic fashion the conflict between rural and urban ideals as it worked itself out in one group of lives. But this seems to me to have been the core of the book, its reason for being; and the preliminary material I find thin, fragmentary, and rather dull. The bringing of the Gentrys across the ocean, down the Ohio River on a flatboat, and through the Civil War, seems to me an artificial performance and, on the whole, rather pointless. I wish Mr. Van Doren had filled his volume with another contemporary narrative or two as good as "Foreclosure".

FINE FIRST NOVELS

David Burnham's *This Our Exile* (Scribner, \$2.50) is a novel which it is easy to misjudge. I, at least, dipping into it midway as I confess I sometimes do, almost dismissed it as just another gin and wisecracks book, devoted to detailed accounts of young Midas and whatever you call the female of his species getting loudly drunk in night clubs. But something took me back to it, and I came to realize that this isn't such a book at all, that it is very far from fitting a conventional pattern. It is a persuasive and terribly understanding account of a brief critical period in two families and in eight or nine individual lives. Each of these major characters is presented firmly, with rounded adequacy, with comprehension not lessened by the fact that the whole story is presented though the consciousness of one of

the eight. As a whole, *This Our Exile* is a richly authentic novel of contemporary American life on one of its higher economic levels. More than that, it is a book of people and emotions too real to be forgotten.

Vastly different but also very moving is Marshall McClintock's *We Take to Bed* (Cape and Smith, \$2.50). It is the story of the battle against tuberculosis in the lives of two young people. Large parts of the book present Saranac and the life there. This young husband and wife are poor. They have a child. They work hard, and fight hard against the disease; and the issue of the contest is left in doubt at the end of the book. The narrative has the quality of a diary with its matter of fact simplicity, its abundant minor detail. It grows poetical and "written" only in its accounts of the laboratory work in which the young man engages at Saranac — and this is a portion of the book with which I am in keenest sympathy. The high excitement of seeing a rightly mounted and stained microscopic slide come clear, and of exploring it under the high power — that is an experience I have never seen celebrated in fiction before, and it is one that richly deserves celebration. What funny people we writers are: we yell continually about living in a scientific age and about what science does to us; and of modern science itself, in terms of actual experience of its methods and processes, we are as ignorant as though we were contemporaries of Shelley.

Apart from its treatment of science I found in the sincerity and candidness of this book of McClintock's much to admire. It is a sound and moving record of significant experience.

ANOTHER ROBERT NATHAN

Older readers of *THE MIDLAND* will not need to be told that I am a Robert Nathan fan. Here is another of his slender, perfectly wrought, fanciful, ironic, and wholly delightful narratives: *The Orchid* (Bobbs-Merrill, \$2.00). It is not the best — not the gayest, nor the keenest, nor the most tender. But it is genuine Nathan, and I am grateful for it. Gambrino belongs with the immortals, giraffe and all; and the "gala opening" is lovely. I find that I return to Nathan's earlier books, and that they repay my coming. So, I am sure, will *The Orchid*.

